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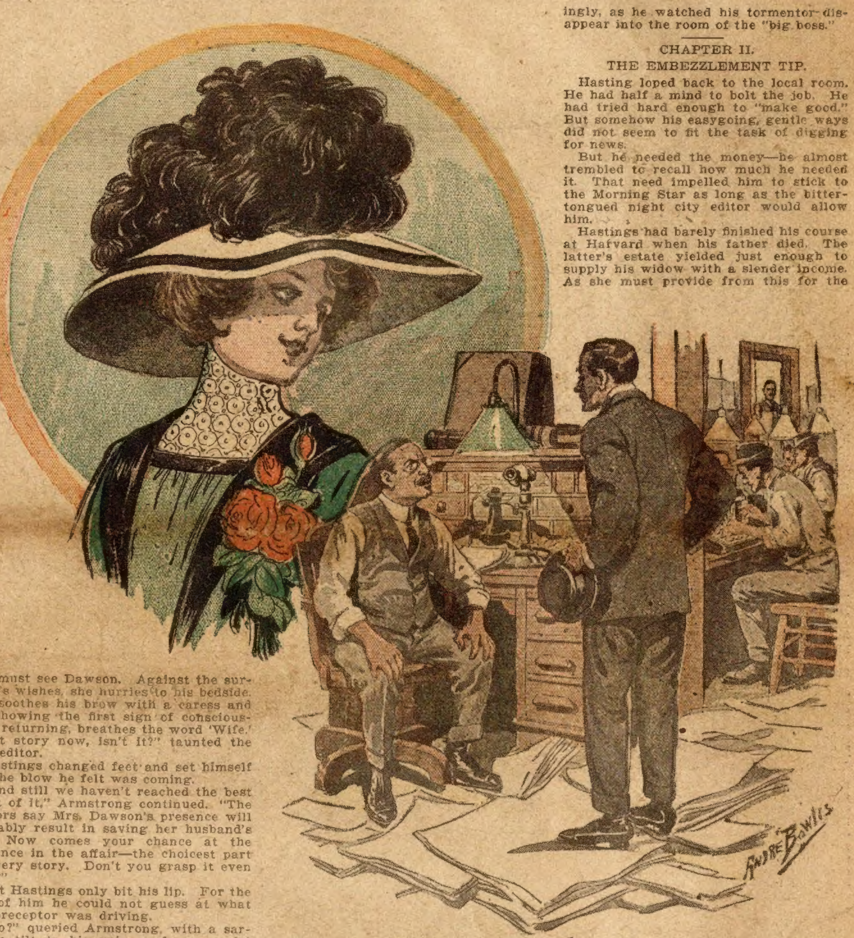
The "Cub's" Choice;

Or, THE LADY OR THE SCOOP?

By George T. Hargreaves



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CHAPTER I.

A LESSON IN JOURNALISM.

THE night city editor of the Morning Star bobbed up from his seat and glared impatiently across the stretch of typewriter desks in the "local room" where half a dozen reporters were nimbly driving their machines.

"Rotten, rotten!" he muttered in disgust as he flung down a few sheets of manuscript. "Jimmy"—to an office boy—"round up that 'cub' Hastings and drive him in here."

Then he sank back into his chair, wrinkled his forehead deeply and with his busy fingers drummed spasmodically upon his desk.

"Bob" Armstrong, night city editor of the Star, was a mighty clever and pleasant chap personally, but five years of incessant watch over the metropolis for news, of combing the highways and byways for "scoops," of keeping old reporters of irregular habits straight and trying to teach new ones some tricks of the trade that were crooked, had insidiously converted him into a bundle of overstrained nerves and a spinner of hectic language.

"That 'cub' Hastings," discovered in an obscure corner of the "local room" bent over the pages of a popular magazine, looked more like a full-grown bear than a "cub." There was six feet and two inches of him as he shambled up to the city editor's desk—also a sunny smile and air that had won an absolute divorce from care.

Yet behind his sheepish grin there lurked the realization that the scowl on his superior's face meant trouble. Thrice already in his brief two weeks' experience on the Star had he confronted this Cerberus in the city editor's chair. Thrice had he writhed inwardly at the biting criticism passed upon his work. Thrice had he gone away humiliated and angered. Thrice had he vowed: "I'd 'a' punched his face in if he was only half my size. And I'll do it yet if he don't look out!"

"Did you do this Dawson yarn?" blurted the night city editor, shaking the few sheets of manuscript the new reporter recognized as his own.

"I did, sir."

"This is the fourth time I've told you, I believe," went on Armstrong, his cold gray eyes looking steelily into those of the "cub," "that one of the first rules here is to remember to put your name at the top of the first sheet of your copy, and this is the fourth time, I think, that you've neglected to do it. The fourth, isn't it?" The query was voiced in the choicest sarcasm.

"Yes, sir," replied Hastings with an attempt at humility, but with a closer approach to a grin.

"You've treated this story like a piece of cheese," Armstrong went on scathingly. "You had all the material for a screamer. The day force must have been 'nutty' when they gave you the assignment. A 'cub' on a romance! Faugh!"

Hasting shifted from one foot to the other uneasily while a white spot grew in each of his pink cheeks.

"Think of your chance, think of it?" fumed Armstrong. "Willard Dawson, rich broker, just divorced from his wife for cruelty, rams into a telegraph pole with his automobile while kidnaping the little daughter whose custody the court had granted Mrs. Dawson. He is hurled out on his head. Concussion of the brain, maybe a fracture of the skull. The child miraculously escapes unhurt. There are facts enough to make a thriller."

The night city editor paused to give his remarks a chance to sink in. Then he went on, his voice pitched a little higher:

"But here's better stuff. Dawson is rushed to Flower Hospital. There surgeons are in doubt at first whether he can recover. The daughter, in tears, is returned to her mother. She cries, 'Papa is dying.' The divorced wife's old love rekindles. She hastens to the hospital. She must see Dawson. Against the surgeon's wishes, she hurries to his bedside. She soothes his brow with a caress and he, showing the first sign of consciousness returning, breathes the word 'Wife.' Great story now, isn't it?" taunted the city editor.

Hastings changed feet and set himself for the blow he felt was coming.

"And still we haven't reached the best point of it," Armstrong continued. "The doctors say Mrs. Dawson's presence will probably result in saving her husband's life. Now comes your chance at the romance in the affair—the choicest part of every story. Don't you grasp it even now?"

But Hastings only bit his lip. For the life of him he could not guess at what his preceptor was driving.

"No?" queried Armstrong, with a sarcastic tilt to his voice and a scornful glance in his eye. "Don't catch the point yet, eh?"

Hastings, beginning to flame inwardly as much in resentment at his treatment as at the exhibition of his shortcomings, shook his head shortly.

"Well, you saw Mrs. Dawson at the hospital, didn't you? Got a talk out of her, didn't you?" asked the night city editor savagely.

"Just a minute or two's talk," apologized the "cub."

"Long enough to ask her if the accident hadn't reconciled her to her husband and if she wouldn't remarry him, wasn't it?" prodded Armstrong.

"I never thought of that," admitted Hastings with surprised eyes.

"Trust you for not thinking of things," snorted the Cerberus.

"And besides——" stumbled the "cub" with a trace of heat in his pleasant voice.

"Besides what?" demanded the city editor.

"I don't believe I would have asked that question even if I had thought of it," came quite steadily.

"Why?" The word spattered against Hastings' ear like the shot out of a bird gun.

"Because I don't think it would have been gentlemanly."

"What!" the annoyed Armstrong fairly screeched. Then, as if to bar the flow of a torrent of expletives that struggled to escape his tongue and yet which he felt blindly would only partially express his conception of this cub's assininity, he clapped his hand over his mouth.

Quite a minute was necessary for him to compose his features and to regain control of his torrid tongue.

"Gentlemanly, eh?" he blurted sarcastically. "Well, that's a new one. I've heard men here put up all kinds of weird bluffs for not getting the stories they were sent out after. But, believe me, this is the first time 't wouldn't have been gentlemanly' has been sprung on me."

Hastings started a stumbled apology: "I'm sorry, sir——"

"That never got us a news item," Armstrong interrupted ruthlessly.

Then, gripping the sheets of Hastings' copy, the irritated city editor made a dash into the presence of the managing editor.

"Here's where I'm fired," muttered the "cub" to himself, half angrily, half smilingly, as he watched his tormentor disappear into the room of the "big boss."

CHAPTER II.

THE EMBEZZLEMENT TIP.

Hasting loped back to the local room. He had half a mind to bolt the job. He had tried hard enough to "make good." But somehow his easygoing, gentle ways did not seem to fit the task of digging for news.

But he needed the money—he almost trembled to recall how much he needed it. That need impelled him to stick to the Morning Star as long as the bitter-tongued night city editor would allow him.

Hastings had barely finished his course at Harvard when his father died. The latter's estate yielded just enough to supply his widow with a slender income. As she must provide from this for the support of her daughter, it was imperative for the son to grub for himself.

He tried newspaper work in Boston, but in a few months the metropolis lured him. In half a dozen newspaper offices he visited in search of a position, he failed to get by the crusty office boy stationed at the door. In three other offices his name and address were taken with the tenuous promise that "if anything turns up, we may let you know."

The Star finally took him on for two weeks' trial at a price so meager that it shriveled his pride. But, determined not to call upon his mother for further aid, he accepted it.

He lasted the two weeks—much to his own surprise. For he couldn't seem to suit Armstrong's demands. He felt a little more secure when he got into his third week. He allowed himself a long sigh of satisfaction when from the day chief of the Star—who took a liking to the big, smiling "cub" because they were both Harvard alumni—he received the assignment to cover the Dawson case.

But now he was done for. A cold chill crept up his back as he thought of Armstrong and the managing editor in conference picking his story to pieces with savage criticism. He was almost tempted to quit his job for good. He'd be fired anyway within the next five minutes.

Furtively he watched the night city editor issue from the room of the "big boss" with a serious face and a hasty step. He waited in nervous, expectancy to be summoned to the slaughter.

But instead Armstrong dropped the "cub's" despised story on his desk and then called out, "Oh, Jim Terry."

Terry, a short, red-faced individual with only a thin fringe of hair around the crown of his enormous head, was the star reporter of the staff. He had run down big stories for twenty years. There was hardly a man of prominence in New York that he didn't know. Better still, he had the remarkable faculty of making them talk, grilling out of them information that they had no wish to give to the public. He could write, too—vividly, forcefully and with due regard to the facts.

But Terry had one serious failing. He loved liquor. Oh, how he loved it! So much that he wanted it with him always. And it was rarely that he didn't satisfy the want.

"Jim" was regularly counted on to lose one day a week through the over-indulgence of his alcoholic appetite. Two more days were required to clear up thoroughly the links in his speech and to steady the uncertainty in his feet. The rest of the week he spent in slowly succumbing to his inordinate taste for drink.

Terry's worst day was invariably the day following payday. His fat salary envelope simply couldn't seem to endure confinement in his pockets. It appeared to crave the more spacious quarters of the saloonkeeper's cash register.

Yet Terry at his worst was better than the vast bulk of reporters at their best. Therefore, the Star clung to him despite his failing.

Payday being but one day past, Terry's condition as he slowly made his way across the room in response to the city editor's call was not reassuring. His eyes were bloodshot from lack of sleep, his step was faltering, his breath was liquor-laden.

Armstrong braced him back into a corner, grabbed the lapel of his coat and hoarsely whispered:

"Jim, straighten up quick now. We've got a big and a hard job for you."

"The bigger and harder the better," responded Terry with a leer and a purse of the lips.

"And there's a bonus of twenty-five dollars from the 'big boss' if you land it tonight." The city editor tapped the reporter's breast significantly.

"Couldn't pay it in advance, could you?" grinned the oscillating "Jim."

"No, only on delivery of the goods," snapped Armstrong. Then he went on with low-pitched but tense voice: "Langdon"—that was the managing editor—"got a tip just now of a big embezzlement in a lower Broadway bank. One of his Wall street friends gave it to him. But we don't know the name of the bank."

"That's hopeful," grunted Terry. "There's about a dozen banks in lower Broadway."

"But that isn't all the tip. The bank is trying to hush the matter up. Afraid publicity will hurt its reputation."

"Police don't know anything about it then, eh?" quizzed "Jim."

"Not a peep. We're a little better off. There's to be a secret meeting of bank officials tonight at the home of Paul Baker."

"But Baker has got his grip on half a dozen lower Broadway banks," blurted Terry.

"Of course he has," the night editor shot back. "But listen: Our tip is that the secret meeting has to do with the embezzlement, that the Baker banks are being rounded up there for the purpose of completely bottling up all information as to the affair, and also to plan for the protection of the bank affected in case the news should get out and start a run on it."

"You don't expect me to get anything out of Baker, do you?" grunted "Jim."

"You can try."

"Why, man," snorted Terry, "it'd be easier for me to break into one of that man's steel vaults than to pry open his lips. He's the sphinx of Wall street."

"Nevertheless, you've got to make the attempt if you can't think of a better way to get at the bottom of this."

"What time is this secret meeting to be pulled off?"

"Around ten o'clock, we hear."

"A fine chance I've got to get that bonus," sneered "Jim." "The 'old man' knew he was safe enough in offering it."

"But I tell you you must get something out of this," insisted Armstrong. "It's probably a whale of a story and it'll be a corking scoop besides."

Terry turned away grumbling and unsteady.

"And, say, 'Jim,'" Armstrong called after him, "you'd better take somebody along with you to telephone us developments. You may not want to leave the job that long."

"Who'll I take?" Terry growled as he clutched a desk to steady himself.

"Oh, it's only a messenger boy's job," snapped Armstrong. "Take young Hastings there." Then while the "cub" raged inwardly at this open reflection on his value, the city editor added the additional affront: "I'll take care of this Dawson yarn. It's got to be entirely rewritten anyway."

Terry was not too stupefied to appreciate the poignant hurt in Armstrong's words. As he saw the "cub's" face drawn and angry, he tapped him on the shoulder and whispered disjointedly:

"Ne'er mind, son; you and me 've got a big bank embezzlement story to run down. I'm gonna put you in right."

"Oh, I'm all in in this office," sighed Hastings.

"You meet me in front of Paul Baker's house at Fifth avenue and Ninety-fifth street at half past nine an' I'll show yo' a trick or two," instructed "Jim" with an uncertain toss of the hand. "Remember, Baker house, pas' nine."

And the star reporter shoved both hands deep into his trousers pockets and shuffled on to the elevator.

Hastings glanced at his watch. It was just seven. He had ample time in which to get his dinner and then squeeze out a few minutes on his way uptown to drop in and have a brief chat with Miss ——.

"Telephone, Mr. Hastings," called an office boy. "In booth two."

The "cub's" heart took a spurt at the summons for there was but one person he had been getting telephone messages from.

"Is that you, Allen?" quivered a sweet voice over the line.

"What's the matter, Mabel?" he asked, alarmed at the agitation in the voice.

"Please come up right away. I'm in dreadful trouble." The words ended with a sob.

"Right away," he said, "as fast as the subway will carry me."

CHAPTER III.

THE MISSING FATHER.

Hasting hustled into the subway, drummed his fingers impatiently on his knees because the express train moved so slowly, and then hustled out again at Seventy-second street.

As he mounted the steps of a beautiful West End avenue apartment house, it came to him like a panoramic picture how he had grown to know Mabel Carrington so well. There was the little Cape Cod summer resort at which they had first met three summers before, the bathing day and the boating days leading up to the sail when a squall had overtaken their craft, upset it and left him to keep her afloat for an hour until help arrived.

Allen never gave himself any credit for his conduct in that extremity, but the girl insisted on crediting him with saving her life. And her friends imitated her example. While her father, who the summer colony had learned was an under-officer in a New York bank, gripped the blushing Hastings' hand and murmured gratefully with a tremor in his voice:

"I can never fully thank you, my boy. She is all I have left since her mother died."

Thus the romance started. Mabel and Allen corresponded with ever-increasing frequency. No formal engagement had bound them and yet both realized that marriage must be the inevitable outcome of their regard for each other.

Yet Allen hesitated to ask the fateful question of the girl as long as he was unable to see his way clear to support a wife adequately. As it was, he was barely able to earn enough to pay his own way.

The move to New York had been largely due to his desire to be near the girl of his heart. Likewise the chance of more pay and faster promotion was greater here. Yet he had to admit—with a tug in his throat as he pushed the button of the Carrington apartment—that the outlook for both had been materially dimmed by the developments of the past hour.

Mabel opened the door to him in person.

"Why, my dear girl," he exclaimed as he seized her hand, "what's the matter?"

"Sh!" she whispered, with her finger to her lips as she led him through the long hall into the library. "I don't want the servants to know."

A glance at her under the glow of the electric light startled him. Her face was drawn and her eyes red and swollen as from long weeping."

"Mabel, dear," he began anew, "what is the trouble? You look as if somebody in the family was dead."

She sank into a chair and looked at him with suffused eyes.

"Allen," she said brokenly, "father has not been home since yesterday morning and—I am—terribly—worried."

"Not at home since yesterday morning? And you don't know where he is?"

She shook her head pitifully. Then she rose and from the secretary took a note and handed it to Hastings.

"Read it," she whispered with a sob; "it's all I know."

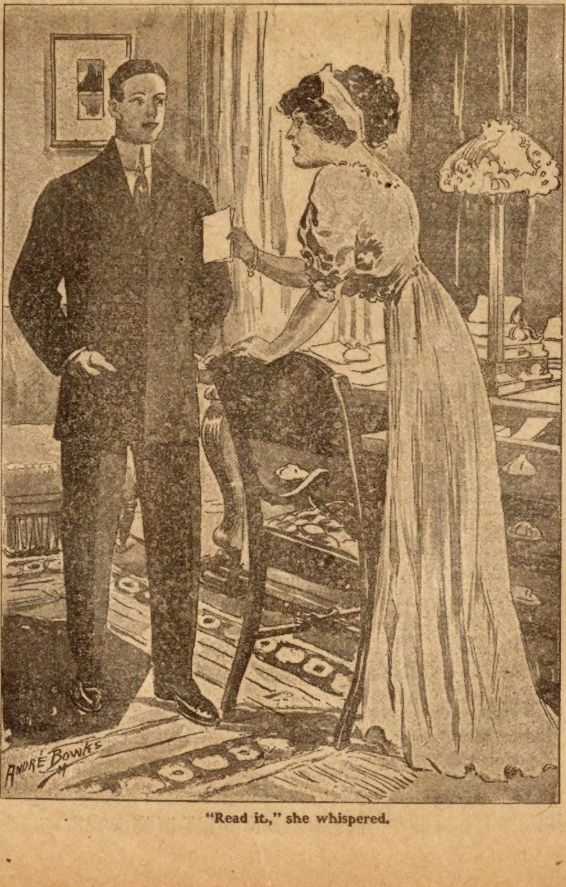
Allen opened the note gingerly. He felt as if he were on the threshold of a family tragedy. Yet the note itself held nothing alarming. It simply read:

"Dear Daughter:—I am called away unexpectedly. I may not be back for several days. I will let you know my destination if necessary. But under no circumstances give the information to any one else. Your loving

"FATHER."

"When did you get this?" inquired Allen.

"I found it on the dining table when I got up yesterday morning. Papa had gone—and without even bidding me good-by," and the girl bit her lips to keep back the tears.



"Read it," she whispered.

"Have you heard from him since?"

"Not a word."

Hastings thought a moment and then in some embarrassment asked:

"Have you heard from any one else about—his going away?"

"Oh, yes," Mabel replied innocently. "The cashier of the Nineteenth National—where papa is head teller—was here with another gentleman yesterday afternoon. They asked me if I knew where he was. That surprised me because I had thought he had probably gone away on the bank's business."

"And what did you tell them?" Hastings asked quietly. A dim suspicion was taking birth in his mind.

"Why," answered the girl steadily, "I showed them his note. They seemed much put out. They rather insisted that I had got some message from papa and that I was trying to keep it from them. They were really quite rude."

Hastings rubbed his ruddy face and curled his lip within his fingers as he pondered over the situation.

"And was that all?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I'd almost forgot. They wanted to go through his secretary there and examine his private papers. But I backed up against it and wouldn't let them," the girl ended defiantly.

"Good for you! And then they went away?"

"Oh, no. They remained for nearly an hour. They asked me all about papa's hours and what he did at home. And the strange man who came with the cashier kept prowling back and forth, peeking into one room and then another as if he really expected to find papa behind a door somewhere."

And while the daughter innocently described the circumstances, her sweetheart felt his heart sink at the forbidding suggestions that they inspired.

"And you don't know of anything that might have taken your father away from home?" Allen questioned after a pause.

"No, not the slightest thing."

"Has he been well—in good health?"

"Not especially. And I have noticed that lately he has been given to worrying. He has been sitting up for hours after I have retired, usually studying over books and papers that I knew nothing about."

"Maybe a glance at these might give us an idea as to his whereabouts or his purpose in going away," suggested Hastings, groping for an explanation different from the dire one his mind was being forced to accept.

"I never thought of that," said Mabel, her face lighting with hope.

Hastening across the room, she threw open the compartments of the secretary. She drew down a number of account books, some bunches of letters, a book of receipts.

"Come, help me, Allen," she urged.

But neither of them in their examination disclosed any clew to the mystery in Carrington's disappearance. They were about to give over the effort when the girl with a clutch at her throat exclaimed in an awesome whisper:

"Oh, I remember. Papa burned a lot of papers in the grate on the night before he went away. I left him at it when I retired"

Hastings examined the fireplace and was turning away without result when in the roof, beyond the reach of the flame, he sighted a torn bit of paper. It had been carried into a crevice by the draft and had lodged there.

On the table they smoothed it carefully out till it was possible to read clearly:

"—— closed out your account for lack of margins. Your account is now $4,112,-50 short. Please remit at once."

The signature of which only a part remained was that of a well-known Wall street brokerage house. Allen studied the remnant of paper silently before he dared look into the face of the daughter. Here was evidence that the father, a trusted bank officer, had been speculating. That was a violation of stringent banking rules. But worse still, he evidently had been a heavy loser.

A bank official, a speculator, a loser. That conjured up a picture whose import, coupled with her father's strange disappearance, Hastings could not bring himself even to hint to the daughter. He was even afraid to remain longer in her presence lest some thoughtless word of his should reveal to her his suspicions.

"But you'll help me, won't you?" the girl pleaded.

"I'll do my best," he answered. "Meanwhile, say nothing to anybody," was his parting caution.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "CUB'S" DILEMMA.

Hastings, making his way solemnly across Central Park toward his Fifth avenue rendezvous with "Jim" Terry, seemed suddenly to feel a heavy load shifted to his shoulders. He tortured his mind in vain for some explanation of Carrington's disappearance save the evident one that he had been losing at speculation, had used some of the bank's funds in his operations and, unable to restore them, had fled.

Then, in a flash that fevered him from

(Continued on page nineteen.)

Ben Sheldon's Love;

Or, A SCOUT OF THE PLAINS

By Ella Martin

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CHAPTER IV.

SCOUT AND CHIEF.

FOR a moment the two men gazed at each other in silence.

"The only way to save her!" said the scout. "What nonsense is this? How could a marriage with me save Myrtle Wayne? And from what would it save her?"

"From herself."

"Explain!"

"I will. To escape me, she has consented to wed the chief at the village yonder, whom you know is my mother's son, and a halfbreed Indian. Listen, and I will tell you the story of my life, as my mother told it to me."

"There is not time."

"I will be brief; and Myrtle is in no immediate danger. I alone can precipitate a fight between the redskins and the movers, so our time is our own for the present."

The scout made a motion for him to proceed. He was himself occupied in keeping down his rising anger. But for this man all would have gone well with the wagon-train. Had Jack Dutton kept away from the Indian encampment they would have been allowed to move on in the morning, because of the late treaty between the Indians and the white men. Now he could see difficulties ahead from which he might not be able to extricate his charges without danger to them. For if he could read Myrtle Wayne aright, she was passionate and recklessly headstrong, one who would make it hard to save her even from herself.

"My mother," began Jack, "was taken prisoner by the Indians when quite a young girl, and to save herself from a death of torture at the stake, she yielded to the demands of the chief, who then ruled where now my brother reigns, and married him, hoping to some day make her escape.

"Later, a son, the present chief, was born to her, whom she loathed by spells because of the savage blood in him, and at other times loved violently because she pitied him—pitied him because Fate had made him a halfbreed.

"Many times she laid plans to kill her Indian husband, but recoiled from the act because it was a crime. But the continual temptation, and the resistance it required, drove her nearly demented.

"Finally she was taken prisoner by another tribe, who had won a victory over her husband's people in a fierce fight between them. The child was not taken; and for many months she was separated from him against her will. Among the Indians who now held her was a halfbred, made so in much the same way as her own son. She turned to him because of the white blood he possessed, and persuaded him to take her to the nearest white settlement. But before he would consent to take her away he compelled her to marry him. And then unknown to his tribe, the two left by night in a canoe well filled with provisions. She could not have gone back to the child, had she remained among the Indians, and therefore did not desert him in any sense.

After many hardships, and many dangers narrowly averted, the two reached the white settlement. There they lived in peace and safety for a year; and there I was born. Then my father died. My mother took me and went among strangers; and when I was eight years old she, too, died. On her deathbed she told me the story of her life, and made known to me the fact that there was Indian blood in my veins.

"I was not proud of the fact, and I hid the knowledge in my own heart. But in after years I made a journey to this place and made myself known to my brother, who had recently become chief of his tribe. He did not receive me warmly, but gave me safe passport out of the Indian country.

"Tonight, in a fit of jealousy, I threatened to follow and kill you, and boasted of my Indian blood to Myrtle to impress her with my unforgiving nature. She spurned me, and denied her love for you, for she knows you care nothing for her; and she would marry this Indian chief to prove that she is as indifferent to you."

"She could prove that by marrying you couldn't she?" asked Ben, impatiently. "Can you not persuade her of that?"

"She hates me for my importunities, she says, and has chosen between my brother and myself. But it was because of my threat to kill you that she wandered to the Indian camp. She went to find you and warn you against me. She lost her way and was taken prisoner by the redskins, and held to be made wife of the chieftain."

"Taken prisoner!" exclaimed the scout. "How dare they violate the treaty? I will send a report to the fort, and the soldiers shall come and overwhelm them."

"If your messenger is not scalped on the way. Besides, before the soldiers could reach this place they could break camp, and taking their captive with them, be many miles on their journey to some other of their haunts in, no one knows what direction."

"I will go to the chief at once," Ben said, without further argument in that direction, "and demand that he liberate her."

"He will certainly do so," replied Jack. "He offered to let me fetch her away with me. She is not now being held against her will. It is to defy me, and prove to you that she cares nothing for you that she has volunteerd to stay. I fear we cannot persuade her."

"Then we will get her some other way. We must."

"Just so; and that is why I have told you all. She passionately acknowledged to me that she loved you, but would die before she would marry you, because you cared nothing for her. As you reminded me, I am mostly white, and my sympathies are with the white people in my cooler moments. And I relinquish my suit for her hand to you to save her from spoiling her life. Convince her of your love and ask her to wed you. If you can only convince her she will surrender."

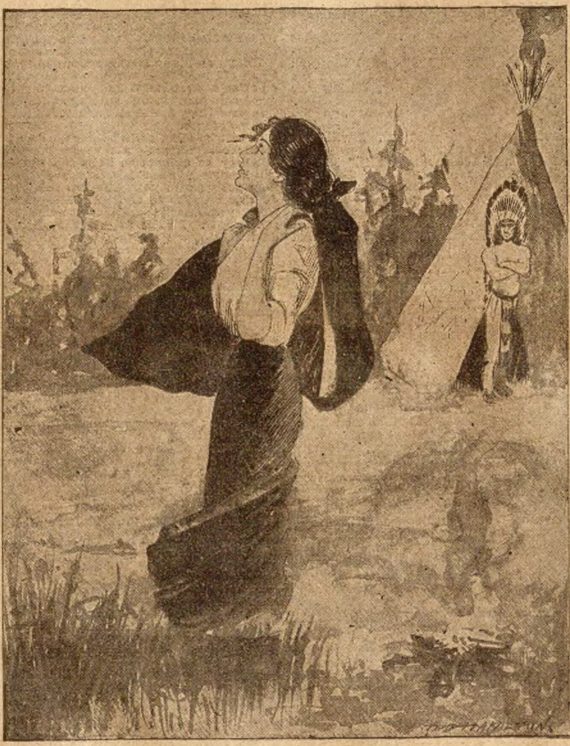
Ben turned impulsively to Jack and offered him his hand.

"Your better side has triumphed," he said heartily. "Together we will save her, but not in the manner you have planned. A promise to wed I could not live up to, neither could I break my word, once it was given. I trust—nay, I believe, you are mistaken about her preference for me, and that she did not mean what she said. I have certainly given her no encouragement.

"Now return to camp and assure the others that I will bring her safely back, and I will endeavor to remonstrate with this foolish girl, and win her back to reason. If that fails—"

"What then?"

"We will take her by force."



She would be free—free!

"A fight with the Indians would prove disastrous to our little party."

"By strategy, then. I do not know yet. I must talk with Miss Wayne first."

Crestfallen, and regretting his rashness of the earlier part of the evening, Jack made his way back to the wagons. He called in the sentinels as Ben had had directed, and had them seek rest inside their wagons. But he himself kept guard. Not that he believed it necessary, but he knew he could not sleep.

Meanwhile, Ben, the Scout, went on his mission of duty. Boldly he sought the presence of Wind-that-Blows and laid the case before him.

"White maiden will decide," the chief replied briefly, and waving his hand toward the tepee where Myrtle was now a willing and unguarded captive, he turned away and entered his lodge.

It was with mixed feelings that our Ben entered the presence of the wilful girl confined there. As he lifted the tent-flap Myrtle sprang to her feet and stood regarding him with animated features and heaving bosom. But she did not speak.

"Miss Wayne," he said, "what madness is this? Come with me; we will leave this place immediately. Your friends must not know of this madcap escapade."

"It is nothing of the sort. I am in earnest. Go back and tell my friends I will remain behind and wed the chief. I shall soon be Mrs. Wind-that-Blows." And a burst of hysterical laughter left her lips.

Whatever her motive might be for taking such a position, Ben did not believe that deep down in her heart she meant it.

"Be reasonable, Myrtle," he said. "I have too much regard for you to permit such rashness."

Looking at her bright eyes and flushed cheeks, knowing that for pride's sake she was sacrificing herself, a wave of tender feeling passed over our hero, such as any young and beautiful woman might inspire in like situation. Ben stepped nearer and impulsively took her hand.

"Miss Wayne,—Myrtle," he pleaded, "for my safe give up this wild idea. I have not persecuted you with my attentions, but I ask you now to marry me. We will wed as soon as we reach the settlement we have in view."

Ben had put all the eagerness into his manner he was capable of, since his heart was not involved, and he fancied he was quite resigned to the sacrifice. Though far away, in the settlement to which he was bound, was a little lass of nine named Hazel, daughter of his old friend Hal Wilson and his wife Hazel King. Whenever he visited their dwelling, this little maiden climbed on his knees and induced him to recount the adventures of that former trip, when he was a boy of fourteen, and an embryo scout, and her parents yet in their courtship days. And when he finished the recital she demanded she invariably informed him that she meant to marry him when she grew up because he was good to keep Indians away, and to reward him for helping save her mother's life in those strenuous times. Ben had become accustomed to this idea, and he had visions of a grown-up Hazel to whom he felt bound.

In view of all this he felt a magnanimity in thus offering himself to save Myrtle from the consequences of her own folly. But it had been better had he spared himself the attempt.

"That is the worst yet!" she cried, passionately. "You presume, Mr. Sheldon! You have listened to the ravings of that jealous quarterbreed. But you are both mistaken. I am becoming the wife of the chief, not because I love him, but because I hate you both and want to get rid of your society."

"Now, Miss Wayne, that won't do for a reason at all. You have no cause to hate me. And Jack loves you so much he will resign all claim upon you to save you from the fate you have blindly chosen. And after all, it strikes me that a quarterbreed would be better than a halfbreed, particularly as the former passes as one of the white race.

"Think of yourself immured all your life in the mountains, bound down to savage customs and savage traditions. You will repent your rash act when it is too late.

"You must decide now, for tomorrow we must move on; I cannot endanger the whole party for the rash foolishness of a recklessly headstrong girl."

"And a moment ago you asked me to marry you," said Myrtle, sarcastically. "You did not say you loved me. Do you think, Ben Sheldon, I do not know where your heart is? I have heard you talk of your friends too often not to know; it is the settlement to which we are going."

"Are you coming away with me? I will see that Dutton ceases his attentions. What will your family think? And all the little Actkins, what will they do without you?"

"Ah, that is it! anything to escape them! You do not know what my life has been with the Actkins. Unappreciated drudgery and unrewarded. But I had to have a home somewhere."

"Myrtle, is this true? Are they unkind to you?"

"To all appearances they are kind enough. But—oh, you are not behind the scenes, and I cannot tell you so that you would comprehend! My life is hateful to me! This seems ungrateful, and I must not say more. But I do not owe the Actkins much."

"Myrtle, will you marry me, and leave all the unlovely past behind? I will take you away from it all."

"Oh, it was hard enough before!" she cried passionately; "before Jack fell in love with me and literally persecuted me with his lovemaking. But now to have you—who do not love me, ask me to marry you out of pity because you think I am in love with you. Oh, it is too much!" And the young girl broke into hysterical weeping.

"I do not think anything about it, Myrtle," he said soothingly, stroking the bowed head. "I ask you to love me, no matter whether you ever did before. We might learn to love each other, you know."

"Ah, I know what you think!" she cried facing him, and dashing the tears from her eyes. "Jack Dutton told you what I said. But you needn't believe him. I said it to spite him, and because he was bound to have it so—that I loved you. Oh, I will never forgive him for all the annoyance he has caused me!"

"But you must come away with me," persisted the scout. "Think of your life spent here in the forest as the squaw and drudge of an Indian chief! Think of bearing him children—you, a white woman!"

The girl covered her face with her hands and shivered.

"I may escape," she said. "I can at least kill myself. But I won't go back to the wagons."

"Then I must find some way to compel you," Ben said firmly, "for leave you behind in the possession of the savages, I will not. Once more, will you come willingly?"

Myrtle stubbornly shook her head.

Without a word more Ben, the Scout, turned and left her.

A feeling of despair settled over the girl when the scout was gone, but in her stubborn pride she would not call him back.

What mattered it what she did with her life? It was all hateful to her. Here in the forest she would find freedom and forgetfulness, maybe. She would have to endure Jack Dutton and the Actkins family no more. And more than all the rest, Ben Sheldon would become to her but a memory and a name.

She would roam the woods and climb the mountainsides; she would float in a canoe on the streams and sit on rocks and watch the waterfalls and dream. She would be free—free! For after all, the chief might consent to let her live among his people without compelling her to become his wife, when she told him how she felt, for was he not half white? And surely, he could understand.

She had seen the scout at the door of the chief's lodge but a moment ago, talking to Wind-that-Blows. A feeling of reaction took possession of her; she turned as if she would call him back. But when she looked again he was gone. She had burned her bridges behind her!

CHAPTER V.

HAROLD LANE.

One of the emigrants who has not yet been mentioned, but who plays an important part in our story, is a young man named Harold Lane, the only son of John Lane and wife. Harold had one sister whom he idolized. Grace Lane was a petite blonde and a vivacious sprite. "Now you see her, and now you don't see her," Harold was wont to say. For one place held her but a few minutes at a time. But she was nearly always seen with Edith Baldwin, a girl as silent and slow in her movements as Grace was talkative and sprightly. As these two were inseparable Harold saw a great deal of Edith Baldwin. And she, like his sister, doted on him. As for Harold, he regarded Edith in very much the same way as he did Grace, and never dreamed of the silent adoration he received from her. He could hardly have been so blind to the truth had he not himself been somewhat attracted by the bright eyes and bewitching smile of Myrtle Wayne.

Edith was a tall, brown-haired, brown-eyed maiden with fair, smooth cheeks and a tender red mouth. Quietly tender and affectionate, but not demonstrative, she drew very little attention from the opposite sex. The man who appreciated Edith Baldwin would be one who understood her.

All the men of the camp were sleeping save Jack Dutton and Harold Lane. The latter had joined Jack in his self-appointed watch. Harold by natural fitness had always taken charge of affairs in the scout's absence at his request. He had conducted things before, and he would not retire now, with Ben away, while there was any chance of danger to the movers. To him Ben always gave directions before leaving, and to him he looked for aid in every emergency.

The two sat outside the corral, and Jack was giving Harold an insight into his passion for Myrtle Wayne, and relating in detail all the happenings of that night.

"What is to be done, Harold?" he asked, when he had finished his recital. "Can you see any way to help us? She will not be persuaded to leave the Indian village with the scout, I am sure of that. She feels the slight of an unrequited affection, and will not listen to reason."

Harold felt a slight contraction of the heart, and his face paled in the light of the August moon. He was silent so long that Jack turned his head to look into his face to learn if he had been listening.

Harold's eyes were fixed on the approaching form of the scout, and so Jack suspected nothing. Then Harold spoke, and his voice was even and steady. He had gained the mastery of himself. Until that moment he had hardly realized how enamored he had been of the bewitching Myrtle.

"Evidently you made a failure of your suit," he said then. "You did well to surrender to the scout before more harm was done. It is a matter of course that Ben Sheldon should take precedence where the ladies are concerned. To most women he is a hero, and we common men must take a back seat. Naturally, we feel it," and he gave a forced laugh, "but Ben is not to blame. He can't help being handsome and intelligent and capable. No more can women help admiring that sort of man. But you are right, Ben, the Scout, is heart-whole as yet, albeit he worships an ideal.

"But here is Ben himself and we will learn what success he has had with the wilful Myrtle. Upon my word, she would have led you a life. Better congratulate yourself on your failure to win her. She has too tempestuous a nature to make any man happy."

"I have a nature of like sort," answered Jack. "And I would like nothing better than the job of conquering her contrary spirit."

Harold regarded the other keenly in the moonlight. Ben had paused and was gazing in the direction from which he had come, listening intently.

"No," hastily added Jack, observing the other's scrutiny, "I would not be masterful. I have had my lesson, and I now understand the nature of the girl I love. If I had been less in earnest I might have won her in time. But passion and demonstration sicken her. If Ben had loved her, she would have been less desirous of possessing his affections. She wants what she cannot have; or at least a quiet affection that will not disgust her."

At that moment Harold's thoughts reverted to Edith Baldwin and her quiet ways. But he did not reply, for just then the scout joined them.

"What success?" queried Jack eagerly.

"None at all," Ben replied impatiently. "She is the most unreasonable, stubborn girl I ever met with. It is the worst piece of folly that ever came to my knowledge. She refuses to come away, and the chief refuses to give her up unless she is willing. She is not anxious to get back to the Actkins family, I take it. And she is determined to prevent your future attentions at any cost. You must have pestered her a good deal, Jack."

Jack looked sheepish, but there seemed to be no resentment in his heart toward the scout now.

"I suppose so; but I have come to my senses, and I am determined that Myrtle shall not sacrifice herself to be rid of me."

"I assured her that you would trouble her no more. And—"

"And did you—?"

"Yes; I asked her to marry me."

"You offered to marry her, you mean," Jack said, feeling that Ben had not done the thing right in Myrtle's sight, and that he had betrayed the fact that he offered himself merely to save her from the rash act she contemplated.

"Oh, I did it up properly enough, I think. I never had any experience before. But she refused to believe I loved her. Well, I told her we could learn to love each other and—oh, everything I could think of. But to no purpose. The girl is certainly determined."

"However, we can't leave her behind. Now what is to be done? The chief threatens war if we attempt to take her. We must use strategy. Have you anything to suggest?"

Jack was thoughtful and did not answer.

"Harold," Ben said, suddenly, "I must turn over the care of the caravan to you for a spell. Tonight I will take my saddle-horse and some provisions and repair to the hermit's cave. If I have not forgotten how to gain an entrance I can hide there till you have gotten out of the immediate country with the wagon-train. The Indians will think we have gone on, satisfied to leave Myrtle behind. And then, when their suspicions are allayed, I will steal the girl, if I have to gag her, and hide her in the cave till I can steal away, taking her with me.

"Do you think you can manage the journey? The Indians are not hostile, and the route is mapped out. I will give you a diagram of it."

"I am sure I can manage it," Harold replied unhesitatingly.

"Very well. Now, Jack, if you want to assist me to find the cave—"

But Jack Dutton had departed while they were talking, and they could not tell how much of the conversation he had heard before he left them.

"If I never show up," the scout said, in parting, "try to get the movers to the settlement in safety."

"I will do all you say, and conduct your little party to their destination to the best of my ability."

"I know you will, Harold."

The two men clasped hands for a moment, then parted, the one going inside the corral, the other plunging into the forest in the direction of the mountainside.

A sort of desolate feeling crept over the newly-appointed guide, as Ben Sheldon disappeared from sight in the wood. He felt the responsibility weigh heavily upon him. He felt almost helpless for the moment.

Besides, there was something else that caused a weight on his heart. He scarcely realized what it was. At the same time a sort of breathless, jubliant feeling was underlying it all. And he felt free—a sensation he had not known for a long time. He walked to one of the wagons and leaned his head against it, bowed in his arms, enjoying the strange, new sense of freedom.

"I have wrested myself at last from the thrall of her bright eyes and her witching manners," he whispered. "I have long wanted to be free, and now my eyes are opened. She is too unreasoning and wayward to make any one happy. I never meant to speak of my folly to her, but to live it down. And now I am glad I hid it in my breast, for there is one more worthy than she who loves me."

His thoughts wandered to Edith Baldwin. How shy and sweet and gentle she was! It had come to him suddenly, on his own awakening love for her that she had a preference for him.

"Poor Myrtle!" he murmured, going back in his thoughts to the old fancy for a moment. "I hope the scout may be able to rescue her. Otherwise, her obstinacy will wreck her life."

When the morning dawned Harold made known to the emigrants the wishes of the scout, stating only that Myrtle was in the hands of the Indians, and that he could not come with them until he had obtained her release, which would not be difficult since the savages dare not harm her for fear of the soldiers from the fort. This tribe had been taught a lesson in that line, not so long ago.

There was great surprise and annoyance when the movers learned the state of affairs, and that the scout would be detained just at the point of their journey where they needed him most.

"The ungrateful girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Actkins, "to go outside the camp and get herself captured! If she had been minding the children as she'd ought, she wouldn't be in this fix."

Not one of them insisted on remaining where they were till the missing girl was restored to them. Myrtle was well enough liked, but the women were timid about remaining longer in the vicinity of an Indian encampment, and the men were anxious to complete their journey. She had no relatives among them to be greatly concerned.

The scout had returned during the night and taken away some provisions, enough to last several days, telling them only that he had been able to gain an entrance to the cave he had spoken of. Then he had gone again, and left the responsibility of leadership upon the inexperienced shoulders of Harold Lane.

Following the directions of Ben, the Scout, Harold instructed them concerning the program for the next few days, and then they broke camp and set out on their first day's journey.

Harold rode on ahead as the scout had always done, riding back now and then to make report as to the conditions of the route.

Jack Dutton had not turned up with the morning, and none doubted that he had joined the scout in the work of obtaining Myrtle from the hands of the Indians.

At length they reached a spot among some trees around a bend in the mountain. It was unfamiliar to all, but it was the place where Ben had instructed them to camp and await his coming for a day or two at least, in which time he hoped to be able to rejoin them.

Some chafed under the enforced delay; but the young people looked upon the experience as something of a lark.

The place was known to Ben, the Scout, as one where the movers defended themselves against the Indians when he was a boy and making his first journey across the plains. The mountains, near which the trail led, was in front of them, a deep wood was on either side, while the open prairie was at the rear. And in the glade itself was now and then a tree under which to sit. And taken all in all it was a pleasant place in which to camp.

Hattie and May Actkins went giggling to an old tumbled-down pile of logs, that on Ben's first trip had been an impromptu fort. And getting out their weapons they declared themselves ready for a defense.

"Don't be silly, girls," their mother admonished. "It may not be such a joke. We may be obliged to fight the Indians. No knowing what Myrtle's foolishness may get us into yet. She has robbed us of the scout's protection, at any rate. Now, you, Hattie and May, come help get supper. Myrtle ought to be here to do it."

Harold was busy arranging the wagons for the night, but he noted the words and tone of the woman, and could see that she did not place much confidence in him. And he felt as if one of the older men ought to have been given the charge of things. He also began to realize what life had been with this family to a high-spirited girl like Myrtle Wayne. He had known all along that none of the Actkins had been considerate of her feelings or her welfare.

"But to take the course that she has taken to escape them!" he muttered. "She might better have married Jack. I wonder if it is true that he is quarter Indian. Any way, there has been an awful change in the man since Myrtle left us—his white blood has come uppermost, maybe. At least I believe he would give her up to another cheerfully, to get her out of the hands of that half-breed chief, even though he is related to him."

But then, there had been as great a change in Harold Lane. He began to realize it himself, and the conviction grew on him each hour.

His work was finished now, and he stood leaning against a tree, watching the women around the campfires getting the evening meal. His eyes singled out Edith, and watched her every moment.

There were other eyes that watched the young girl—dark, covetous eyes, but they were those of a savage, and they gazed from the shelter of the trees beyond the clearing.

And none of the emigrants dreamed that danger was nigh!

This powerful story will be continued in the next week's Ledger. Do not miss reading it. A lot of great and timely stories will appear in the Ledger during this year. Send in your subscription and you will find yourself repaid ten time over.

* * *

The great display of household goods which Tyrrell Ward & Co. offer our readers free on page seven this issue, is well worth every ones attention.

* * *

A Meeting.

There is a man in New Jersey named Hilliard Throckmorton (or they say that there is and that this all happened to him) and he is 37 years old. When he was 15 years old he had a pet turtle, and he carved his initials and the date on the turtle's back. He lost that turtle, and he forgot about it until one day last summer when he went swimming in a pond near where he lives and caught a turtle with his toe. He had to pry off the turtle with a cold chisel, but he forgave it all the pain and trouble it had caused him when he found on its shell the intitials and date he had carved there twenty-two years before.

WRONG SORT

Perhaps Plain Old Meat, Potatoes and Bread May Be Against You For a Time.

A change to the right kind of food can lift one from a sick bed. A lady in Welden, Ill., says:

"Last spring I became bed-fast with severe stomach trouble accompanied by sick headache. I got worse and worse until I became so low I could scarcely retain any food at all, although I tried about every kind.

"I had become completely discouraged, and given up all hope and thought I was doomed to starve to death, until one day my husband, trying to find something I could retain, brought home some Grape-Nuts.

"To my surprise the food agreed with me, digested perfectly and without distress. I began to gain strength at once. My flesh (which had been flabby) grew firmer, my health improved in every way and every day, and in a very few weeks I gained 20 pounds in weight.

"I liked Grape-Nuts so well that for four months I ate no other food, and always felt as well satisfied after eating as if I had sat down to a fine banquet.

"I had no return of the miserable sick stomach nor of the headaches, that I used to have when I ate other food. I am now a well woman, doing all my own work again, and feel that life is worth living.

"Grape-Nuts food has been a God-send to my family; it surely saved my life; and my two little boys have thriven on it wonderfully." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

* * *

Thread.

Before the advent of spools of thread was supplied in skeins. The skein was cut through at one end and it was wrapped in a bit of paper or cloth with the loop projecting. A pin or a few stitches secured the wrapper and thus kept the thread clean.

* * *

To Develop the Bust

To Beauty Editor: I am so ashamed of my thin bust that I want to ask you if there is any harmless way to develop it. My hips and the rest of my body are right for the present styles and I do not want them any larger, but my bust is so flat that I would try anything that gave hope of even three or four more inches development. MARY S.

The only thing I know of that will develop the bust without increasing the size of the hips, or without putting on flesh where not needed, is a prescription put up by The Dr. Kelly Co., especially for small and undeveloped breasts. It is the discovery of a woman physician whose practice was largely among her own sex and in most cases increases the bust measure four to six inches in a month. Send 10c to the Dr. Kelly Co., Dept. 92GA, Buffalo, N. Y., and they will send you a trial package of the treatment without charge. This is said to be of great value in cases of arrested development of the bust and will give a full, beautiful form without anyone knowing that the treatment was used.

Many mothers have told me that after the baby had been weaned, the breasts became flabby and shrunken, but the use of Dr. Kelly's prescription made them full and firm. Do not use pads or bust forms, as they never look natural and have a bad effect upon the general health. Neither would I recommend ordinary flesh builders or tonics, as they increase the hips and limbs and with the present styles the form should be slender everywhere except a generously developed bust.

* * *

Not for the Aunt.

Small Boy—I want a box of pills, please.

The Druggist—What kind, my boy? Anti-bilious?

Small Boy—No, it's uncle, sir.

* * *

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

* * *

In the Bughouse.

The Ant—Did you hear the discussion last night between the fly and the spider?

The Bee—Yes, the fly didn't leave the spider a leg to stand on!

* * *

J. P.

Those suffering from weakness and lack of vigor should take JUVEN PILLS. One box will tell a story of marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Made by its originators, C. I. HOOD CO., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, LOWELL, MASS. (Z)

* * *

In the course of time a woman may forget why she hates a man, but she will continue to hate him just the same.

Famous Ghost Stories

THE DREAM-WOMAN

By WILKIE COLLINS

SOME years ago there lived in the near suburbs of a large seaport town on the west coast of England a man in humble circumstances, by name Isaac Scatchard. His means of subsistence were derived from any employment that he could get as an ostler, and occasionally when times went well with him, from temporary engagements in service as stable-helper in private houses. Though a faithful, steady, and honest man, he got on badly in his calling. His ill-luck was proverbial among his neighbors. He was always missing good opportunities by no fault of his own, and always living longest in service with amiable people who were not punctual payers of wages. "Unlucky Isaac" was his nickname in his own neighborhood, and no one could say that he did not richly deserve it.

With far more than one man's fair share of adversity to endure, Isaac had but one consolation to support him, and that was the dreariest and most negative kind. He had no wife and children to increase his anxieties and add to the bitterness of his various failures in life. It might have been from mere insensibility, or it might have been from generous unwillingness to involve another in his own unlucky destiny; but the fact undoubtedly was, that he had arrived at the middle term of life without marrying, and, what is much more remarkable, without once exposing himself, from eighteen to eight-and-thirty, to the genial imputation of ever having had a sweetheart.

When he was out of service he lived alone with his widowed mother. Mrs. Scatchard was a woman above the average in her lowly station as to capacity and manners. She had seen better days, as the phrase is, but she never referred to them in the presence of curious visitors; and, though perfectly polite to every one who approached her, never cultivated any intimacies among her neighbors. She contrived to provide hardly enough for her simple wants by doing rough work for the tailors, and always managed to keep a decent home for her son to return to whenever his ill-luck drove him out helpless into the world.

One bleak autumn, when Isaac was getting on fast toward forty, and when he was, as usual, out of place through no fault of his own, he set forth from his mother's cottage on a long walk inland to a gentleman's seat, where he had heard that a stable-helper was required.

It wanted then but two days of his birthday; and Mrs. Scatchard with her usual fondness, made him promise, before he started, that he would be back in time to keep that anniversary with her, in as festive a way as their poor means would allow. It was easy for him to comply with this request, even supposing he slept a night each day on the road.

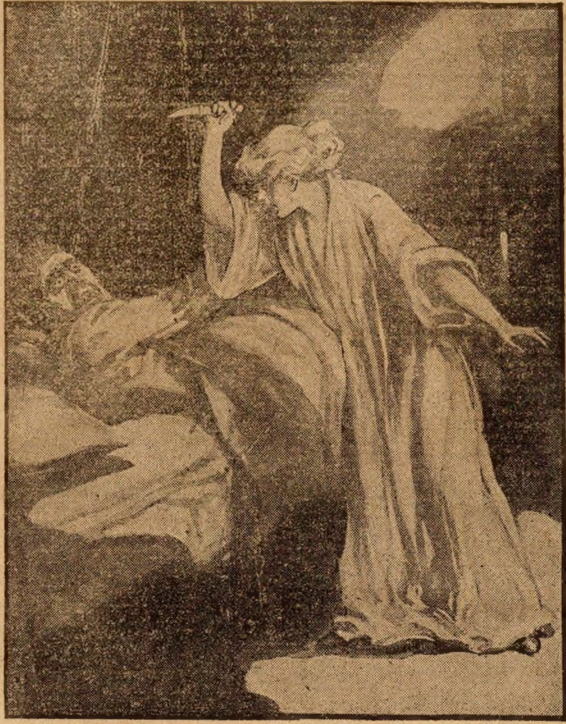
He was to start from home on Monday morning, and, whether he got the new place or not, he was to be back for his birthday dinner on Wednesday at two o'clock.

Arriving at his destination too late on the Monday night to make application for the stable-helper's place, he slept at the village inn, and in good time on the Tuesday morning presented himself at the gentleman's house to fill the vacant situation. Here again his ill-luck pursued him as inexorably as ever. The excellent written testimonials to his character which he was able to procure availed him nothing; his long walk had been taken in vain; only the day before the stable-helper's place had been given to another man.

Isaac accepted this new disappointment resignedly and as a matter of course. Naturally slow in capacity, he had the bluntness of sensibility and phlegmatic patience of disposition which frequently distinguish men with sluggishly working mental powers. He thanked the gentleman's steward with his usual quiet civility for granting him an interview, and took his departure with no appearance of unusual depression in his face or manner.

Before starting on his homeward walk, he made some inquiries at the inn, and ascertained that he might save a few miles on his return by following a new road. Furnished with full instructions, several times repeated, as to the various turnings he was to take, he set forth on his homeward journey, and walked on all day with only one stoppage for bread and cheese. Just as it was getting toward dark, the rain came on and the wind began to rise, and he found himself, to make matters worse, in a part of the country with which he was entirely unacquainted, though he knew himself to be some fifteen miles from home. The first house he found to inquire at was a lonely roadside inn, standing on the outskirts of a thick wood. Solitary as the place looked, it was welcome to a lost man who was also hungry, thirsty, foot-sore and wet. The landlord was civil, and respectable-looking, and the price he asked for a bed was reasonable enough. Isaac therefore decided on stopping comfortably at the inn for that night.

He was constitutionally a temperate man. His supper consisted of two rashers of bacon, a slice of home-made bread, and a pint of ale. He did not go to bed immediately after this moderate meal, but sat up with the landlord, talking about his bad prospects and his long run of ill-luck, and diverging from these topics to the subject of horse-flesh and racing. Nothing was said either by himself, his host, or the few laborers who strayed into the tap-room, which could, in the slightest degree, excite the very small and very dull imaginative faculty which Isaac Scatchard possessed.



She raised the knife again.

At a little after eleven the house was closed. Isaac went round with the landlord and held the candle while the doors and lower windows were being secured. He noticed with surprise the strength of the bolts and bars, and iron-sheathed shutters.

"You see we are rather lonely here," said the landlord. "We never have had any attempts made to break in yet, but it's always as well to be on the safe side. When nobody is sleeping here, I am the only man in the house. My wife and daughter are timid, and the servant girl takes after her missuses. Another glass of ale before you turn in? No! Well, how such a sober man as you come to be out of a place is more than I can make out, for one. Here's where you're to sleep. You're our only lodger tonight, and I think you'll say my missus has done her best to make you comfortable. You're quite sure you won't have another glass of ale? Very well. Good night."

It was half-past eleven by the clock in the passage as they went upstairs to the bedroom, the window of which looked on to the wood at the back of the house.

Isaac locked the door, set his candle on the chest of drawers, and wearily got ready for bed. The bleak autumn wind was still blowing, and the solemn, monotonous, surging moan of it in the wood was dreary and awful to hear through the night-silence. Isaac felt strangely wakeful. He resolved, as he lay in bed, to keep the candle alight until he began to grow sleepy, for there was something unendurably depressing in the bare idea of lying awake in the darkness, listening to the dismal, ceaseless moaning of the wind in the wood.

Sleep stole on him before he was aware of it. His eyes closed, and he fell off insensibly to rest without having so much as thought of extinguishing the candle.

The first sensation of which he was conscious after sinking into slumber was a strange shivering that ran through him suddenly from head to foot and a dreadful sinking pain at the heart, such as he had never felt before. The shivering only disturbed his slumbers; the pain woke him instantly. In one moment he passed from a state of sleep to a state of wakefulness—his eyes wide open—his mental perceptions cleared on a sudden as if by a miracle.

The candle had burned down nearly to the last morsel of tallow, but the top of the unsnuffed wick had just fallen off, and the light in the little room was, for the moment, fair and full.

Between the foot of the bed and the closed door there stood a woman with a knife in her hand, looking at him.

He was stricken speechless with terror, but he did not lose the preternatural clearness of his faculties, and he never took his eyes off the woman. She said not a word as they stared each other in the face, but she began to move slowly toward the left-hand side of the bed.

His eyes followed her. She was a fair, fine woman, with yellowish flaxen hair and light-gray eyes, with a droop in the left eyelid. He noticed those things, and fixed them on his mind before she was

End Corns for 15 Cents

A Blue-jay plaster applied in a jiffy—stops the pain at once. Then the dot of B & B wax gently loosens the corn. In two days the corn comes out.

You get a package for 15 cents, and the money back if they fail.

Don't parley with corns—don't pare them and nurse them. Don't make them sore. Here's a way to remove them without any discomfort. And millions of people are using it.

Go get a package. It is folly to have corns.

A in the picture is the soft B & B wax. It loosens the corn.
B protects the corn, stopping the pain at once.
C wraps around the toe. It is narrowed to be comfortable.
D is rubber adhesive to fasten the plaster on.

Blue-jay Corn Plasters

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Bauer & Black, Chicago and New York
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round at the side of the bed. Speechless, with no expression in her face, with no noise following her footfall, she came closer and closer—stopped and slowly raised the knife. He laid his right arm over his throat to save it; but, as he saw the knife coming down, threw his hand across the bed to the right side, and jerked his body over that way as the knife descended on the mattress within an inch of his shoulder.

His eyes fixed on her arm and hand as she slowly drew her knife out of the bed; a white, well-shaped arm, with a pretty down lying lightly over the fair skin—a delicate lady's hand; with the crowning beauty of a pink flush under and round the finger nails.

She drew the knife out, and passed again slowly to the foot of the bed; stopped there for a moment looking at him; then came on—still speechless, still with no expression on the blank, beautiful face, still with no sound following the stealthy footfalls—came on to the right side of the bed where he now lay.

As she approached, she raised the knife again, and he drew himself away to the left side. She struck, as before, right into the mattress, with a deliberate, perpendicularly downward action of the arm. This time his eyes wandered from her to the knife. It was like the large clasp-knives which he had often seen laboring men use to cut their bread and bacon with. Her delicate little fingers did not conceal more than two-thirds of the handle; he noticed that it was made of buckhorn, clean and shining the blade was, and looking like new.

For the second time she drew the knife out, concealed it in the wide sleeve of her gown, then stopped by the bedside, watching him. For an instant he saw her standing in that position, then the wick of the spent candle fell over into the socket, the flame diminished to a little blue point, and the room grew dark.

A moment, or less, if possible, passed so, and then the wick flamed up, smokingly, for the last time. His eyes were still looking eagerly over the right-hand side of the bed when the final flash of light came, but they discerned nothing. The fair woman with the knife was gone.

The conviction that he was alone again weakened the hold of the terror that had struck him dumb up to this time. The preternatural sharpness which the very intensity of his panic had mysteriously imparted to his faculties left them suddenly. His brain grew confused—his heart beat wildly—his ears opened for the first time since the appearance of the woman to a sense of the woful, ceaseless moaning of the wind among the trees. With the dreadful conviction of the reality of what he had seen still strong within him, he leaped out of bed, and screaming, "Murder! Wake up there! wake up!" dashed headlong through the darkness to the door.

It was fast locked, exactly as he had left it on going to bed.

His cries on starting up had alarmed the house. He heard the terrified, confused exclamations of women; he saw the master of the house approaching along the passage with his burning rush-candle in one hand and his gun in the other.

"What is it?" asked the landlord, breathlessly.

Isaac could only answer in a whisper. "A woman, with a knife in her hand," he gasped out. "In my room—a fair, yellow-haired woman; she jobbed at me with the knife twice over."

The landlord's pale cheeks grew paler. He looked at Isaac eagerly by the flickering light of his candle, and his face began to get red again; his voice altered, too, as well as his complexion.

"She seemed to have missed you twice," he said.

"I dodged the knife as it came down," Isaac went on, in the same scared whisper. "It struck the bed each time."

The landlord toook his candle into the bedroom immediately. In less than a minute he came out again into the passage in a violent passion.

"The devil fly away with you and your woman with the knife! There isn't a mark in the bedclothes anywhere. What do you mean by coming into a man's place, and frightening his family out of their wits about a dream?"

"I'll leave your house," said Isaac, faintly. "Better out on the road, in rain and dark, on my road home, than back again in that room, after what I've seen in it. Lend me a light to get my clothes by, and tell me what I'm to pay."

"Pay!" cried the landlord, leading the way with his light sulkily into the bedroom. "You'll find your score on the slate when you go downstairs. I wouldn't have taken you in for all the money you've got about you if I'd known your dreaming, screeching ways beforehand. Look at the bed. Where's the cut of a knife in it? Look at the window—is the lock busted? Look at the door (which I heard you fasten yourself)—is it broke in? A murdering woman with a knife in my house! You ought to be to be ashamed of yourself!"

Isaac answered not a word. He huddled on his clothes, and they went downstairs together.

"Nigh on twenty minutes past two!" said the landlord, as they passed a clock. "A nice time in the morning to frighten honest people out of their wits!"

Isaac paid his bill, and the landlord let him out at the front door, asking with a grin of contempt, as he undid the strong fastenings, whether "the murdering woman got in that way?"

They parted without a word on either side. The rain had ceased, but the night was dark, and the wind bleaker than ever. Little did the darkness or the cold or the uncertainty about the way home matter to Isaac. If he had been turned out into the wilderness in a thunderstorm, it would have been a relief after what he had suffered in the bedroom of the inn.

What was the fair woman with the knife? The creature of a dream, or that other creature from the unknown world called among men by the name of ghost? He could make nothing of the mystery—had made nothing of it, even when it was midday on Wednesday, and when he stood, at last after many times missing his road, once more on the doorstep of home.

His mother came out eagerly to receive him. His face told her in a moment that something was wrong.

"I've lost the place; but that's my luck. I dreamed an ill dream last night, mother—or maybe I saw a ghost. Take it either way, it scared me out of my senses, and I am not my own man again yet."

"Isaac, your face frightens me. Come in to the fire—come in, and tell mother all about it."

He was as anxious to tell as she was to hear; for it had been his hope, all the way home, that his mother, with her quicker capacity and superior knowledge, might be able to throw some light on the mistery which he could not clear up for himself. His memory of the dream was still mechanically vivid, though his thoughts were entirely confused by it.

His mother's face grew paler and paler as he went on. She never interrupted him by so much as a single word; but when he had done, she moved her chair close to his, put her arms around his neck, and said to him:

"Isaac, you dreamed your ill dream on this Wednesday morning. What time was it when you saw the fair woman with a knife in her hand?"

Isaac reflected on what the landlord had said when they had passed by the clock on his leaving the inn; allowed as nearly as he could for the time that must have elapsed between the unlocking of his bedroom door and the paying of his bill just before going away, and answered:

"Somewhere about two o'clock in the morning."

His mother suddenly quitted her hold of his neck, and struck her hands together with a gesture of despair.

"This Wednesday is your birthday, Isaac, and two o'clock in the morning was the time when you were born."

Isaac's capacities were not quick enough to catch the infection of his mother's superstitious dread. He was amazed, and a little startled also, when she suddenly rose from her chair, opened her old writing-desk, took pen, ink, and paper, and then said to him:

"Your memory is but a poor one, Isaac, and now I'm an old woman mine's not much better. I want all about this dream of yours to be as well known to both of us, years hence, as it is now. Tell me over again all you told me a minute ago, when you spoke of what the woman with the knife looked like."

Isaac obeyed, and marveled much as he saw his mother carefully set down on paper the very words that he was saying.

"Light-gray eyes," she wrote, as they came to the descriptive part, "with a droop in the left eyelid; flaxen hair, with a gold-yellow streak in it; white arms, with a down upon them; little lady's hand, with a reddish look about the finger nails; clasp-knife with a buckhorn handle, that seemed as good as new." To these particulars Mrs. Scatchard added the year, month, day of the week, and time in the morning when the woman of the dream appeared to her son. She then locked up the paper carefully in the writing-desk.

Neither on that day nor on any day after could her son induce her to return to the matter of the dream. She obstinately kept her thoughts about it to herself, and even refused to refer again to the paper in her writing-desk. Ere long Isaac grew weary of attempting to make her break her resolute silence; and time, which sooner or later wears out all things, gradually wore out the impression produced on him by the dream. He began by thinking of it carelessly, and he ended by not thinking of it at all.

The result was the more easily brought about by the advent of some important changes for the better in his prospects, which commenced not long after his terrible night's experience at the inn. He reaped at last the reward of his long and patient suffering under adversity by getting an excellent place, keeping it for seven years, and leaving it, on the death of his master, not only with an excellent character, but also with a comfortable annuity bequeathed to him as a reward for saving of his mistress' life in a carriage accident. Thus it happened that Isaac Scatchard returned to his old mother, seven years after the time of the dream at the inn, with an annual sum of money at his disposal sufficient to keep them both in ease and independence for the rest of their lives.

The mother, whose health had been bad of late years, profited so much by the care bestowed on her and by freedom from money anxieties, that when Isaac's birthday came round she was able to sit up comfortably at table and dine with him.

On that day, as the evening drew on, Mrs. Scatchard discovered that a bottle of tonic medicine which she was accustomed to take, and in which she had fancied that a dose or more was still left, happened to be empty. Isaac immediately volunteered to go to the chemist's and get it filled again. It was as rainy and bleak an autumn night as on the memorable past occasion when he lost his way and slept at the roadside inn.

On going into the chemist's shop he was passed hurriedly by a poorly dressed woman coming out of it. The glimpse he had of her face struck him, and he looked back after her as she descended the door steps.

"You're noticing that woman?" said the chemist's apprentice behind the counter. "It's my opinion there's something wrong with her. She's been asking for laudanum to put to a bad tooth. Master's out for half an hour, and I told her I wasn't allowed to sell poison to strangers in his absence. She laughed in a queer way, and said she would come back in half an hour. If she expects master to serve her, I think she'll be disappointed. It's a case of suicide, sir, if ever there was one yet."

These words added immeasurably to the sudden interest in the woman which Isaac had felt at the first sight of her face. After he had got the medicine-bottle filled, he looked about anxiously for her as soon as he was out in the street. She was walking slowly up and down on the opposite side of the road. With his heart, very much to his own surprise, beating fast, Isaac crossed over and spoke to her.

He asked if she was in any distress. She pointed to her torn shawl, her scanty dress, her crushed, dirty bonnet; then moved under a lamp so as to let the light fall on her stern, pale, but still most beautiful face.

"I look like a comfortable, happy woman, don't I?" she said, with a bitter laugh.

She spoke with a purity of intonation which Isaac had never heard before from other lips than ladies' lips. Her slightest action seemed to have the easy, negligent grace of a thoroughbred woman. Her skin, for all its poverty-stricken paleness, was as delicate as if her life had been passed in the enjoyment of every social comfort that wealth can purchase. Even her small, finely shaped hands, gloveless as they were, had not lost their whiteness.

Little by little, in answer to his question, the sad story of the woman came out. There is no need to relate it here; it is told over and over again in police reports and paragraphs about attempted suicides.

"My name is Rebecca Murdoch," said the woman, as she ended. "I have ninepence left, and I thought of spending it at the chemist's over the way in securing a passage to the other world. Whatever it is, it can't be worse to me than this, so why should I stop here?"

Besides the natural compassion and sadness moved in his heart by what he heard, Isaac felt within him some mysterious influence at work all the time the woman was speaking which utterly confused his ideas and almost deprived him of his powers of speech. All that he could say in answer to her last reckless words was that he would prevent her from attempting her own life, if he followed her about all night to do it. His rough, trembling earnestness seemed to impress her.

"I won't occasion you that trouble," she answered, when he repeated his threat. "You have given me a fancy for living by speaking kindly to me. No need for the mockery of protestations and promises. You may believe me without them. Come to Fuller's Meadow tomorrow at twelve, and you will find me alive, to answer for myself— No!—no money. My ninepence will do to get as good a night's lodging as I want."

She nodded and left him. He made no attempt to follow—he felt no suspicion that she was deceiving him.

"It's strange, but I can't help believing her," he said to himself, and walked away, bewildered, toward home.

On entering the house his mind was still so completely absorbed by its new subject of interest that he took no notice of what his mother was doing when he came in with the bottle of medicine. She had opened her old writing-desk in his absence, and was now reading a paper attentively that lay inside it. On every birthday of Isaac's since she had written down the particulars of his dream from his own lips, she had been accustomed to read that same paper, and ponder over it in private.

The next day he went to Fuller's Meadow.

Concluded next week.

Repulsed.

"You'll just be wasting your time if you open your satchel and try to show me samples of your Peruvian hair restorer," said Mrs. Curfew. "I have had so much experience with agents that I can tell what sort of stuff a man is trying to sell before he says a word, and it's plain to be seen that you are selling Peruvian hair restorer, though I don't see why Peruvians should know more about restoring hair than other people, as it stands to reason that uneducated folks don't have the same opportunities as the professors in our universities, who know all about barks and buds and herbs."

"But I assure you, my dear madam——" began the caller.

"Oh, you don't need to assure me, and I'm not your dear madam, and I don't like too much familiarity from a man with such a red nose as yours. A nose like that indicates dissipated habits, and I feel sure that your conduct hasn't been all it should be, or you wouldn't be reduced to peddling Senegambian stove polish. My younger daughter, who is highly educated, was visiting me yesterday, and so many agents came to the door that we couldn't talk in peace for five minutes.

"My daughter boards with a family of the name of Sparks, and they are estimable people of the highest standing in their community, Mr. Sparks having had his picture printed in a handsome book called 'The Gazetteer of Hicks County.' Mr. Sparks is a mild mannered man, but he always flies into a passion when agents are mentioned, and I can sympathize with him.

"My daughter says he has been greatly worried because he is growing bald, and Mrs. Sparks, thinking she would please him, bought a bottle of Peruvian hair restorer from an agent. I feel sure you are the same man, for my daughter said his nose was like a brakeman's lantern, and he had all the appearance of a dissolute man who was in constant fear of the police.

"Mr. Sparks applied that Peruvian hair restorer to his scalp, according to the directions on the bottle, which were printed in three languages, which is customary, although it seems to me that one language is enough, and if the makers of the remedies would use more and better ingredients and less languages, it would be better for everybody. Well, five minutes after that medicine was put on his head Mr. Sparks began to hop around in great pain, and my daughter, who is a lady of refinement, says that Mrs. Sparks simply had to open the windows to let the adjectives out.

"Why, that medicine was worse than a mustard plaster, and the unfortunate man had to go and sit by the pump, while the women pumped water on his head for an hour. In the morning his scalp was all in ridges, like a corrugated iron roof, and he has had to have poultices on it ever since. Mrs. Sparks took what was left of the medicine to a chemist and had it analyzed, and he said the agent must have made a mistake in filling his bottles, for the preparation used by Mr. Sparks was liquid smoke, or creosote, which is used for curing hams. Ever since that occurence Mr. Sparks carries a shotgun constantly, and also a telescope, and is continually looking up and down the road, hoping that agent will come along.

"I feel sure you are the same man, for only a dissipated person would make such a mistake as to sell creosote to a respectable farmer as a hair restorer, and with such a nose as yours it is useless to try to explain that you are a man of exemplary habits, so the best thing you can do is to run along."

"I am not selling hair restorer," cried the agent, desperately. "I am introducing a compound that will make hard water soft. It was discovered by——"

"Never mind who it was discovered by," interrupted Mrs. Curfew. "What you should introduce is a compound that will bleach noses."

* * *

You may furnish your home without cost. Full particulars on the bottom of page seven this issue. Tyrrell Ward & Co. make the offer.

Straining the Keg.

Every nail keg in the store had its occupant, the checkerboard was working overtime, and mittens and mufflers were stuffed in bulgy pockets as their owners drew close around the big rusty stove.

The door opened noisily, letting in a blast of the storm raging outside, and in its wake followed Rufe Blevins, a giant woodchopper whose good nature and ready wit made him a welcome addition to the store circle.

The loafers moved a little closer together to make room for Rufe on a soap box, but he marched past the friendly circle, plumped an empty molasses keg down on the counter, and drew a stained bill from his pocket, which he held out to the proprietor of the store.

An expectant grin went around the circle, for Storekeeper Jones had the reputation of never wronging himself by overweighing or undercharging. The merchant adjusted his glasses and looked expectantly from the bill to the woodchopper.

"Notice you charged me for five gallons of molasses last time I had this four-gallon keg filled," drawled Rufe. "I don't mind payin' for the extra gallon, Mr. Jones, but I do kinder hate to have a good keg strained to pieces."

CRAWLER VS. SPEEDER.

Philip Cranston was driving his automobile along a highway in the Berkshires at a gait of ten miles an hour and smoking a cigar to please and soothe, when Miss Minnie Graham appeared in a cloud of dust in another atuo and whizzed by him at a gait of thirty miles an hour and missed him by less than a foot.

They looked into each other's faces for a second, and they felt immediate antagonism, one to the other—he because she was reckless and had her chin in the air, and she because she saw reproof in his eyes and had no patience with a man who would crawl along when he could as easily fly.

They had been staying at the same hotel for two days without seeing each other. That evening they were introduced. They had the opportunity to refer in a laughing way to the incident on the road, but neither of them did. On the contrary, they bristled at each other.

"That young man thinks every girl ought to be a poke, like his sisters" was the mental comment of the young woman.

"That person is wilful as well as reckless, and rather conceited to boot," was the mental comment of the young man.

The antagonism was there and both felt it, but they didn't growl and snarl and threaten. O, no! they would have done it in the days of Adam, but times have changed. There was one little outbreak of sarcasm, as they chatted and sized up each other and looked for trouble.

Mr. Cranston quietly asked: "Does it happen that you drive an auto?"

There was an accent on the word drive which mean thirty or forty miles an hour and three or four farmers scared to death.

"O, no—I crawl along in one!" was the reply.

The accent was on the crawl, and Mr. Cranston smiled where he wanted to grit his teeth. The immediate results of the antagonism were that Miss Winnie determined to speed whenever she went out on the road, just to be independent, and Mr. Cranston determined to crawl along, just to show that her jibe had glanced off his armor.

Out of two hundred guests at the big hotel, and out of twenty autoists there were only two who felt quarrelsome.

Other autoists would come in after a spin and congratulate Miss Winnie on her nerve and daring, but Mr. Cranston would sit there with reproof spread all over his face. Other ladies, old and young, who had been out motoring, would come back to speak of him as a sensible young man for maintaining a slow and easy gait, and a smile of contempt could be noticed on a certain face for half an hour after.

The best road from the hotel, and the one invariably taken by the autoists, led to the west. Ten miles away, at the foot of a long hill, stood the farmhouse of one Mr. Jones. There were other farmhouses, but Mr. Jones was the farmer fated to become entangled in the affairs of the two young persons.

One day as Mr. Cranston had started out for a "crawl," and as Miss Winnie had sped past him in her usual manner, almost ticking his wheels and looking straight ahead, Farmer Jones held up his hand for the "crawler" to stop, and then said:

"Does it happen that you know that girl who went by here like a streak of lightning a few minits ago?"

"Why, yes. She is stopping at the Hill-Top."

"Say, now, she ought to be sent to jail! Almost every day she comes along here on the whiz and it's enough to raise your hair. She's killed three chickens, two geese and a turkey. She's knocked down a calf and throwed a hog over the fence, and just now the wind of her machine blew my hat off. You tell her that she's got to stop it."

"Really, but I shouldn't like to carry any such message," was the reply.

"Then I'll build a rail fence across the road and stop her and talk to her myself. O, I can talk when I get mad, and I'm mad now! I'll tell her what's what, and if she sasses back I'll make her pay for the damage she's done. I'm going to be watching out for her when she comes back. This whizzing has got to stop."

Mr. Cranston "crawled" on in secret satisfaction. He didn't want anything serious to happen to the other party, but a fence across the road and a good talking might humble her.

He jogged along for fifteen miles and then pulled out of the road under a tree and waited. He had taken solid comfort for an hour when sounds aroused him. He also saw dust. He also saw a young lady bearing down on him from the other direction in an auto. The gait was forty miles an hour and he sniffed brimstone in the air.

One look that young lady gave Mr. Cranston as she passed him, but it was a look that cut like broken glass. That look spelled out the word "C-r-a-w-l-e-r!" as plain as day. He swallowed the lump in his throat and turned into the highway.

Half a mile before he reached Farmer Jones' place he was smiling. He could see what had happened. As he came up and stopped, there was a cow lying on the road with a broken leg—an auto upset—a dusty and bedraggled young lady with a puzzled look on her face—an indignant farmer shouting at her:

"I knew you'd do it! I knew you'd do it! Killed my poultry and bumped my calf and hog, and now you've gone and broke my best cow's leg! O, you've got yourself into trouble, and don't you think you haven't!"

"You should keep your cow out of the road!" she retorted.

"What! What! Don't make it worse by sassin' me! You've got to pay damages or go to jail! I've got 'em all figgered up. It's $40 for the cow and $10 for the rest. This ain't includin' the way you blowed my hat off this mornin' when you went by."

"I won't pay," said the girl in a trembling voice and taking care not to look at the "crawler."

"Then, b'gosh, you go to jail!"

"I won't! I won't!"

Mr. Cranston opened his purse and took out a $50 bill and handed it over to Mr. Jones.

"Sir!" flashed Miss Winnie at him.

"You will please draw this wreck out of the road, and it will be sent for later." This to the farmer.

"Sir, it's none of your business!"

"Did you ever hear such sass!" gasped Farmer Jones as he turned from one to the other. "She comes along here, and—Jehosaphat, but look up the road!"

There were two blooded horses that had broken loose from a carriage coming on a dead run, with parts of the harness lashing them to greater speed. Mr. Cranston turned and picked up the young lady and swung her into his auto and then sprang in beside her, and the farmer made three long jumps for his gate.

"Sit still," commanded the "crawler" as the girl tried to fling herself out.

She sank back with a sob, and then the machine seemed to take flying leaps. Before it was well under way the foam from the mouths of the flying horses was dropping on the rear wheels. But only for a moment. Then twenty, thirty, forty miles an hour.

Then the horses stumbled and fell, but the auto sped on at fifty—at sixty—miles an hour. The speeder was frightened. She was humbled. She cowered down and hung to the man's arm and gasped, and when the race finally slowed down she looked up and said: "I—I guess I'm willing to be good friends, if you are!"

Later, when the two went on their honeymoon they had arranged a pace suitable to both—they neither crawled nor sped.

* * *

NAUGHTY NAN.

Nan meddled with a funny box, as
naughty as you please,
But, oh, she wished she hadn't when she
soon began to sneeze.
'T was grandpa's snuffbox. Goodness
me!
They say she sneezed enough for three.

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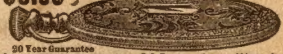

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It sometimes happens that a spinster isn't satisfied with looking younger than she is; she wants to act younger than she looks.

After a woman gets on the shady side of 30 she would rather have a man tell her how young she looks than how pretty she is.

A policeman who attends strictly to his own business is apt to interfere with the pleasure of a great many other people.

Some people are selfish enough to want to keep their troubles to themselves even when their neighbors want to borrow them.

Judging from their actions here on earth, some men will try to beat his Satanic majesty out of his job as soon as they reach the other place.

The Sign of the Beetle;

Or, The Mysteries of Chrysalis Street

By T. C. Harbaugh

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Begun in No. 26, July 1. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER IX.
THE AWAKENING.

WHEN Julius Gwin came back to the light of the world it seemed as though he had emerged from a rayless dungeon into the glare of a tropic sun. He was lying on a cot in a modestly furnished room. His environment puzzled him. He was fully dressed and was sitting up. His gaze roving around the apartment, settled at last upon a figure at a window opposite him. A woman was standing there with her back turned toward his cot. Gradually the shape of that figure grew into familiarity. Kate Chalmers was standing there.

Julius gave a little cough and slowly the woman turned about. The slanting light that stole into the room confirmed his guess. Russell Marley's love was with him.

"You have wakened? I am glad of it," said Kate, coming over to the mystified detective. "You've had quite an adventure, I should say."

Julius raised one hand to his throat and smiled.

"Yes," continued the girl. "I noticed marks on your throat when they brought you here."

"Who brought me?"

"The men who found you on the sidewalk."

He looked more puzzled than ever.

"You must tell me. My mind has been a long blank, it seems."

Kate took a chair near the bed and studied his face a few seconds in silence.

"Of course I cannot give you the whole story. Some time you must put in the missing chapters in the right places. I arose earlier than usual this morning for I had planned a great many things for the day before I went to sleep last night. As I turned the nearest corner from here I found two men stooping over a man who lay prone upon the pavement. When I came up I was horrified to find that it was you. You were unconscious and there was no telling how long you had lain there. I asked the men to carry you to this house and that is why you are here now. My room is just across the hall. That is all, Mr. Gwin, and you see that it is not very much."

Julius thought a moment.

"You say I was found just around the corner?" he said, looking into her eyes.

"Yes," the other street is Lennox."

The next moment the detective thrust one hand into his pocket and withdrew it empty.

"They are gone!" he exclaimed.

"What is missing? Your purse?"

"No, the heads of Ptah."

Kate gave him a stare of mystery.

"Never mind," he said, with a little smile. "You don't understand, I see. I had them in my pocket; no, one was in my hand, when darkness came. I say, are you acquainted in Lennox street?"

The girl shook her head.

"I am scarcely acquainted anywhere," she replied.

"Then, you have never encountered a slender man, dark of face and with long hands?"

"I know of no such person."

"I do to my sorrow. I got into the trap as neatly as you please. And I a detective!"

He seemed at war with himself.

"I may see him again. I hope I shall," Julius remarked, consolingly. "I can easily find the house. I was attacked by a man upon whose trail I was. He called himself the reincarnation of Ptah who was the dominant god of the ancient Egyptians."

"But that cannot be," observed Kate.

"He is dangerous enough to be a Nemean lion," the detective said. "But tell me. What have you discovered since I saw you?"

"But little, unfortunately. Russell says he went to his mother's house that night to get one of my photographs—"

"Yes, he went that far with me," interposed Julius. "But beyond that he would not go."

"I have seen his mother."

"You?"

"She sent for me and I went to the house in Chrysalis street. It was a stormy interview I had with her. I was glad to get away."

"What did the woman want with you?"

"She wanted me to give up Russell, saying that I was beneath him in social standing."

Julius Gwin laughed, seeing a pallor of indignation steal across the girl's cheeks.

"Of course you refused to do her bidding?" he said.

"I did refuse," answered Kate Chalmers. "But let me come back to Russell."

"Yes, I want to hear about him."

"I am no nearer his great secret than I was when I saw him immediately after his arrest," she proceeded. "He must have seen something in his mother's house that night. He refuses to say why he went to the vacant house the other night when the second mystery had birth. It is all as dark as ever."

"The vacant house?" mused Julius aloud. "It is not always vacant from what I have seen."

"No. Then you have been there?"

The detective nodded.

"I think I shall go now." He got upon his feet and pulled himself together. "What a grip that rascal had. His hands felt like red-hot pincers."

The young girl watched him a few moments in silence.

"I would like to know how the heads of Ptah, as you call them, enter into these mysteries, but that is your secret and I shall not attempt to worm it from you."

"We'll rend the veil of mystery later on," said he with confidence. "I thank you very much for having me conveyed here. The fight is on for Russell Marley's rehabilitation."

"I shall never forget you," and Kate held out her hands which he took and held firmly while he looked into the liquid depths of her splendid eyes and thought again that the love of such a girl was worth fighting for.

He quitted the house in Season street and walked away. The morning was fairly on and the breath of it came refreshingly in his face.

Curious to have another look at the house in which he had encountered the dark-faced man, he proceeded rapidly to the nearest corner and turned sharply.

Now that it stood out in the full glow of the new day he easily recognized it. It was a plain brick with old-fashioned shutters which were tightly closed and an air of desertion hung about the place. What had become of the man-tiger, the being who had called himself the reincarnation of the great Ptah? Was he now in his lair? Or had he deserted it for another?

Mr. Gwin hurried off after a brief inspection. He had no desire just then to invade those premises and again come face to face with its human monster. His throat still told him of the encounter and his whole body ached.

He had lost the scarabs and wondered what old Penelly would say.

As he tramped away he thought of the scene he had witnessed in the Egyptian room of the house in Chrysalis street. What did it all mean and why had the man with the beetle ring reeled from Marly-Grant to drop like a felled ox to the floor? And how had he escaped from the house without being seen?

An hour later Mr. Gwin was sitting down to an humble breakfast in a little grillroom which he sometimes patronized. His mind was busy with the mysterious problem while he ate. He could think of nothing else than the strange scenes through which he had just passed and especially of the loss of the beetles.

Would they ever turn up? He believed that the Unknown held the key capable of unlocking the door to Russell Marley's innocence and believing this, he confessed that it would be a Herculean task to force that secret from him.

Mr. Gwin ate his breakfast in silence and strolled out into the street.

In a motor car which sped swiftly past him he beheld Marly-Grant, probably on his way to his downtown office. He followed the great man with his eye till he vanished and then smiled.

Was it chance or fate that landed the detective soon afterward in from of the Mohawk Block where Marly-Grant put in a few hours every day receiving his friends and discussing finances and other important matters with them?

He regarded the building a few minutes and then deliberately entered the granite-walled vestibule and looked over

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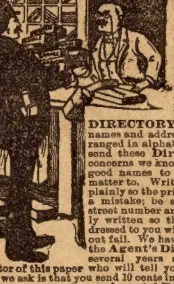

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the directory set in the polished stone.

"Room 398, third floor," said Mr. Gwin aloud and stepped into the elevator.

He was shot up to the floor above and walked down the wide corridor. A heavy door with a heavy glass front confronted him. On the roughened glass he read in letters of gold:

"J. Marly-Grant, Financier."

After a moment's inspection Julius turned the handle of the door and walked forward. A large man was seated at a table with a newspaper before his face. All at once he lowered the sheet and stared at the detective.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "You are quite out of the case, Mr. Gwin. Good morning!"

Julius looked at the man like one petrified with amazement.

CHAPTER X.

CHOPPY GETS GRILLING.

Marly-Grant's curt dismissal of the detective would have astounded the coolest man imaginable.

When he had spoken he went back to his newspaper as though Mr. Gwin were in the antipodes instead of facing him in his elegant office in the Mohawk Block. A little smile rippled over Gwin's lips, he stared at the great man, or at as much of him as was not concealed, and without a word turned and tramped away.

"The coolest man I ever saw," he commented to himself as he went toward the elevator. "He carries his head with him no matter where he goes. I wonder what he would say if he knew that the man with the scarab ring was still living?"

With this young Mr. Gwin went down to the street and disappeared.

Meantime the great man's wife had risen for the day and was lounging half-listlessly in a commodious armchair amid the luxuriousness of the Marly-Grant establishment in Chrysalis street. She apparently had nothing to do but lounge, but had one closely inspected her face he might have detected some uneasiness there.

She was a woman who hardly ever came in contact with her help and, aside from her private maid, she seldom saw any of them. All at once she put out her hand and struck a silver call-bell which stood within reach.

Mr. Choppy happened to be within hearing distance and he came spryly to the door.

"What is it, madam?" he inquired as he poked his head inside.

"Yourself. You are Choppy, aren't you?"

"Yes'm, Choppy, the butler."

Mrs. Marly-Grant nodded.

"Come in," said she and as Choppy obeyed he was waved to a chair which he accepted, wondering why he was wanted.

"What did you see that night, Choppy?"

The interrogative was so abrupt that the hearer gave a quick start and looked into the woman's face.

"I didn't see much," said he, wriggling. "You know, madam, I am the person who found the man on the Persian rug."

"So I have learned. Did you hear any noise that night, a shot for instance?"

"I heard nothing, madam."

"Where were you, Choppy?"

The man flushed.

"I was—well, I was talking to Dora."

"In the house?"

"Yes'm."

"I believe the doctors said the man might have been shot between ten and one o'clock."

"I think they said that," confirmed Choppy who didn't take kindly to the grilling.

"Were you with Dora between those hours?"

"Perhaps I was?"

"And you heard no sounds?"

"Not a sound."

"What did you see that night?"

Mr. Choppy seemed to retreat within himself.

"Who went up to Mr. Russell's room that night," proceeded madam, fixing her gaze on the man before her.

"Madam—"

"You know, Choppy, and I know that some one went there. A certain photograph which was in that room the night before was carried off on that night."

Choppy was fairly cornered.

"It was Mr. Russell, who came," he confessed.

"I thought so!" exclaimed Mrs. Marly-Grant. "You saw him enter the house?"

"I might say that I did."

"When did he leave?"

"I didn't see him leave at all."

"Then you don't know how long he was upstairs?"

"I don't know, madam."

"You roused my husband when you had discovered the thing at the foot of the stairs?"

Mr. Choppy nodded with a perceptible shudder.

"Was he flustrated when he saw the man there?" she asked.

"He was astounded, but madam—"

"You will wait till I ask your opinions," she interrupted. "Did you search the dead man?"

"Bless you, no madam."

"Did my husband search the body?"

"He did not."

"I guess that's all Choppy. But stay! Had you ever seen the man before?"

Mr. Choppy hesitated.

"No lies!" sternly said Mrs. Marly-Grant. "You had previously seen him."

"Only once, madam."

"Where was that?"

"In this house. You were not at home at the time. He called to see Mr. Marly-Grant—"

"When?"

"It was a month ago. They were closeted in the library for an hour."

"And you listened at the door."

"I, madam?—"

"You've been caught eavesdropping before, Choppy," accused the woman. "What did my husband and that man talk about on that occasion?"

"I couldn't catch all they said. Much of it was about a country I never heard of."

"Was it about Egypt?"

"The man mentioned something called the Sphinex—"

"You mean the Sphinx, Choppy. I perceive that your Oriental education has been much neglected," smiled the woman.

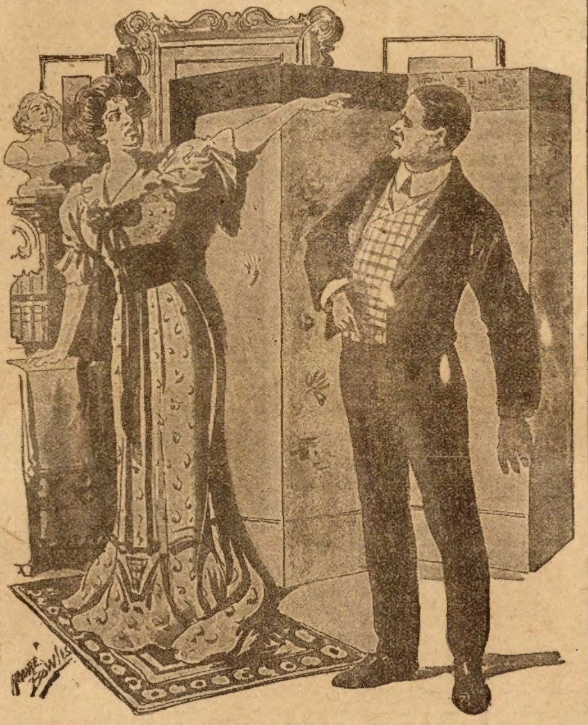
"I never did have much schooling, that's a fact, madam," admitted the butler.

"What did you hear, anyhow?"

"I heard Mr. Marly-Grant tell the man to 'take the horrid thing away.' Those were his very words. What 'the horrid thing' was I cannot say."

"That's all."

Glad to get away, Choppy departed as soon as possible and went off.



"No lies!" sternly said Mrs. Marly-Grant.

The rich lady settled back in her chair and half closed her eyes.

Suddenly she opened them as wide as possible and again tapped the call-bell.

This time a maid appeared and was told to await madam's pleasure with wonderment in her eyes.

Mrs. Marly-Grant found some notepaper in a drawer of the table and drew writing materials toward her. The girl watched her as her jeweled hand slipped back and forth over the sheet. When she finished she folded the paper and enclosed it in an envelop.

"You know the city pretty well don't you—"

"Mabel," helped the maid.

"You know the city, don't you?"

"Yes. I was born here."

"Very well. You will deliver this letter to the address which you can read."

The girl glanced at the superscription and rose to her feet.

"Shall I wait for an answer?" she asked.

"It's not necessary," said Mrs. Marly-Grant. "You will probably find the person at home. That is the address he gives in the city directory."

Mabel took the letter and moved toward the door. If she could have opened the envelope, and no doubt she had a great curiosity to do so, she would have read as follows:

"Mr. Julius Gwin: If you will call at No. 337 Chrysalis street tonight (ten o'clock) you will receive a commission that may be of great pecuniary advantage to you. No answer is required.

CORDELIA MARLY-GRANT."

Mabel knew the city so well that she was soon at the address that appeared on the envelope.

She was told by the woman who opened the front door in response to her ring that Mr. Gwin was probably in, and saying that she had a private letter for him, she mounted the stairs. Julius took the missive from her hands, and the next moment Mabel was flying downstairs as if afraid to remain a moment in his presence.

The girl was about to turn into a certain street to take the right car for Chrysalis street when she felt a hand on her arm.

She drew back the full length of the human tether and looked into the man's face.

"What are you doing down here at this time of day?" asked the man. "You're Mabel, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You don't get off till four o'clock," pursued the man who was none other than Marly-Grant himself. His motor car stood near the pavement.

The startled girl was as white as ashes.

"Where have you been?" demanded Marly-Grant.

"I—I got a note from my sister that she was sick, and I coaxed my mistress to let me come down and get some medicine for her." The girl lied with such consummate glibness that Marly-Grant could not suppress a smile and as his grip loosened she bounded away with her poor little heart in her throat.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAN IN THE DARK.

A man was seated at a table in a part of the city many removes from the home of the Marly-Grants.

He was the sole occupant of the chamber which was rather poorly furnished, but it seemed good enough for a person of his description. He might have been fifty with a dark, parchment-like face and a pair of keen little eyes resembling a bear's and his hands were unusually long and thin.

He was curiously engaged. Upon the table before him lay several brilliant-looking beetles whose backs fairly shone in the light that decended upon them. They were the scarabs of ancient Egypt, the sacred insects of the Ptolemies and the head of Ptah.

He moved them back and forth as his eyes glistened and now and then he picked one up and studied it in the light.

When he had dallied with these strange things for some time he put them away in a small bag which he concealed in his bosom and rose to his feet.

A minute later he opened a drawer and took from it something carefully wrapped in a silken cloth. In another instant he had opened the covering and brought to light a singular-looking

(Continued on page twelve.)

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A Change of Name.

A spinster of uncertain age, while shopping in the city, by chance ran across a man whom she had known as a boy. Greeting him cordially, she was much chagrined to find that he did not recognize her.

"Why, Mr. Smith," she exclaimed, "don't you remember me? I am she that was Cornie Brown."

"Is that so?" responded Mr. Smith. "And what is your name now?"

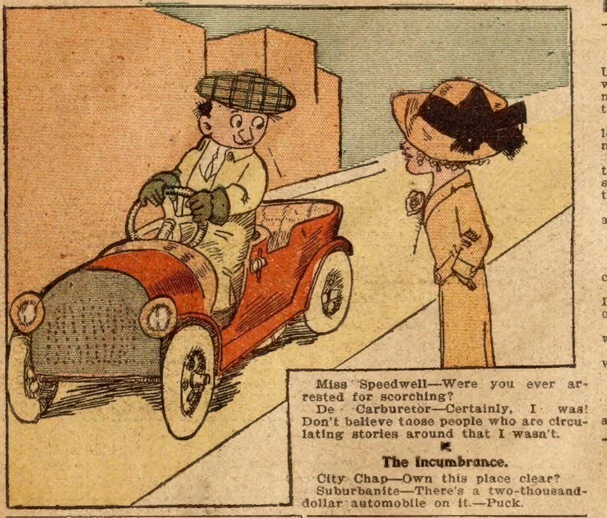
"Cornelia," she replied.

An Embryo Humorist.

"Yes,' said the small bad boy to the reporter, who was looking for an item, "mother fell downstairs and broke three legs."

"Pshaw! What are you giving me, youngster?" cried the reporter. "Don't be too fresh. Your mother hasn't got three legs."

"I didn't say she had," retorted the wicked boy. "The legs belonged to a table which mother fell against. She wasn't hurt at all."



Miss Speedwell—Were you ever arrested for scorching?

De Carburetor—Certainly, I was! Don't believe those people who are circulating stories around that I wasn't.

The Incumbrance.

City Chap—Own this place clear?

Suburbanite—There's a two-thousand-dollar automobile on it.—Puck.

Real Cupidity.

Edna—Jack and I had the most delightful time on shipboard.

Katharine—Gracious! I don't see how you could enjoy yourselves under the watchful eyes of the chaperon.

Edna—Oh, we used a little strategy. You see, we told the chaperon if she would close her eyes she would avoid seasickness, and she kept her eyes closed most of the voyage.

Money Saved.

Little Wife—I saved thirty dollars today.

Loving Husband—You're an angel. How?

Little Wife—I saw a perfectly lovely easy chair that I knew you'd like, and I didn't buy it.

Watered Milk.

Parson—Regarding the milk you deliver here.

Milkman (uneasily)—Yes, sir.

Parson—I only wanted to say that I use the milk for drinking, and not for christening.

A COUPLE OF LAYS.

The rain and the hen have their work,
  As everything earthly must;
The hen gets busy and lays an egg,
  While rain is laying the dust.

The Spooners.

For the fourth time he had said "Good night," but still they lingered on the doorstep.

"Ah, dearest," he whispered tenderly, gazing toward the starlit skies, "the night has a thousand eyes."

"Sh! You goose!" cautioned the pretty girl, as she noticed dark forms at the opposite windows. "Not so loud! The night also has a thousand ears."

Rebelled.

Mrs. Richquick—John, I want you to buy a new parlor suit.

Mr. Richquick—Maria, I've been agreeable enough so far to get different clothes for morning, noon, afternoon and night, but I'm consarned if I'll change 'em every time I go into a different room.

A Business Head.

Lady—I wish to get a birthday present for my husband.

Clerk—How long married?

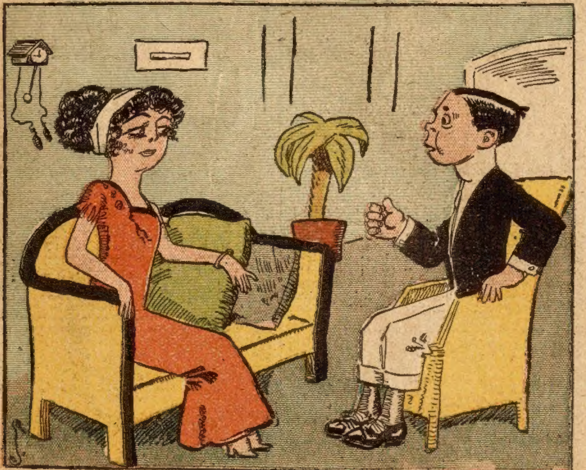
Lady—Ten years.

Clerk—Bargain counter to the right.

Tear Compelling.

First Critic—Soberly has certainly written a pathetic story.

Second Critic—Yes, he ought to include a handkerchief with each copy.



Percy Pettipate—I was so vexed I gave every one there a piece of my mind.
Miss Dill—How did you ever manage to make it go around?

A Question of Spelling.

Old Daniel Drew was at his house on Union Square, New York city, one day, when his clerks sent up for the combination of the safe, which they wanted to open. Drew said it was "door."

They sent again, saying it was a five-letter combination and they couldn't make "door" go.

Finally Drew went down. "When I took the thing in hand," he says, "the safe opened as easy as anything. I turned to them:

"There," says I, "it opens as easy as an old sack. Just d-o-a-r-e."

A Sharp Thrust.

This is a quotation from a Connecticut woman's diary, dated 1790:

"We had roast pork for dinner, and Doctor S., who carved, held up a rib on his fork and said:

" 'Here, ladies, is what Mother Eve was made of.'

"Yes," said Sister Patty, 'and it's from very much the same kind of critter.' "

Practice Makes Perfect.

General Howard was an invalid guest at a dinner given by a boys' patriotic club. "You eat very well, my boy," said the general to a doughty young trencherman. "If you love your flag as well as your dinner you'll make a good patriot."

"Yes, sir," said the boy; "but I've been practicing eating twelve years and I ain't owned a gun but six months."

Another Bunko.

"Did the 'Man Eating Turk' really come from Turkey?" asked the stranger at the wrestling bout.

"No, pal," whispered the diamond bedecked promoter, "he came from Beef Corners, Me."

"Then how in the world did he get the name of Hairu?"

"Why, his first name was Uriah, but he turned it around backward to give it an Oriental flavor."

Juvenile Theory.

Sunday School Teacher—What are sins, Harold?

Small Harold—Parents.

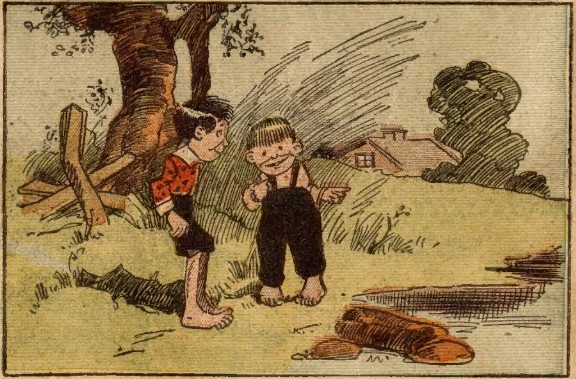
Sunday School Teacher—Why, how do you make that out?

Small Harold—Well, the good book says 'Be sure your sins will find you out,' and that's what parents are always doing.

No Ague Left.

Summer Boarder—I hear that there used to be a great deal of fever and ague around here.

Host—Yes; but none here now, not a bit. We've all got acclimated.



Billy—T'ought yer said de water was up to yer ears? Why, dis pond ain't over ten inches deep!

Jimmy—Aw, well, it'll be up to yer ears if you go in head first.

Not His Move.

Weary Willie—Ever play chess?

Tottering Tommie—Naw; too much like work.

"But you don't have to move for a long time."

"Well, yer got t' move some time, hain't yer?"

After Planting.

Nellie was out riding one day with her grandmother in the country. As they passed a village cemetery, she looked up at the old lady and asked: "Grandma, how long is it after they plant people before their tombstones come up?"

Even Exchange.

"Those people talked all the time you were playing. They couldn't hear a word of your music."

"That's all right," replied the eminent performer. "My music prevented me from hearing their conversation."

To Be Expected.

Housekeeper—Call these apples Rhode Island greenings, do you? Seems to me they are awfully small.

Dealer—Yes, mum. Rhode Island is a small State, mum.

Self Advertising.

The One—How did he manage to become so prominent in politics?

The Other—By irritating his political enemies.

What He Feared.

The manager of a suburban music hall was testing the abilities of several candidates for stage honors one day this week, and this is how he let down one of the would-be funny men:

"I'm sorry, my boy, but your songs won't do for me. I can't allow any profanity in my theater," he said, not unkindly.

"But, my dear sir, I do not use profanity," replied the aspirant.

"No," assented the manager, "but the audience would."

Little Dick's Mystification.

Little Dick—Mamma, did God write the Bible?

Mrs. De Style—Of course, my dear.

Little Dick—He's awful vulgar, ain't He?

Mrs. De Style—Horrors! What do you mean?

Little Dick—He calls Eve a woman 'stead of a lady.

A Delightful Effect.

Artist—Those evergreens on the north side of your house have a delightful effect.

Farmer—I should say they had. Them trees keep off the wind and save 'bout eight dollars' worth o' firewood every winter.

Too True.

"Pop!"

"Yes, my son."

"Is ten dollars a lot of money?"

"It all depends whether I'm earning it, my boy!"

Doesn't Show It.

Miss Wanternow—Was Mr. Darley pleased to find his new baby a girl?

Gazzam—I think not. He named her Mehetabel.

TACKLES
ELLSWORTH YOUNG

Because of Her Silence.

Mr. Jackson—Ole Tom Bragster is puttin' on lots of airs, sayin' he's 100 yeahs ole an' de town's ol'est inhab'tant.

Mrs. Jackson—Huh! I bet he wouldn't be speakin' so pert if ole Miss Johnson would speak de truth!

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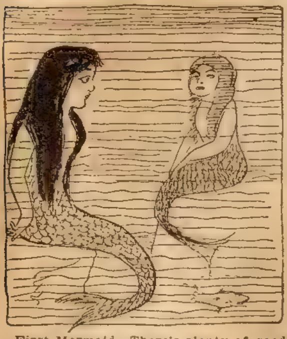


First Mermaid—There's plenty of good fish in the sea.

Second Mermaid—Except one, the devil fish.

The Lady and the Mouse.

"Henrietta," said Mr. Meekton, "I know that you have the courage to face most kinds of peril and fortitude for all ordinary emergencies. But there are exceptions, and you ought to hold one fact in grateful remembrance."

"And what is that?"

"It was one of us mere men who invented the mousetrap."

Written Excuse.

"Captain, the steamship is a day late."

"Fogs will delay any ship, my good man."

"Will you kindly furnish me with a certificate to that effect to hand to my wife?"

The Hen's Method.

"No other business in the world could possibly be conducted on the methods of the hen in the egg industry."

"Why not?"

"Because she lays down on the job."

Too Poor.

"That fellow who tried to kill the judge is crazy, isn't he?"

"No, he's too poor to be crazy—he couldn't hire a lawyer to prove it."

Had Nothing on Clara.

"Dear Clara," wrote the young man, "pardon me, but I'm getting so forgetful. I proposed to you last night, but really forget whether you said yes or no."

"Dear Will," she replied by note, "so glad to hear from you. I know I said 'no' to some one last night, but I had forgotten just who it was."

Revenge.

"I had such a good time the other day watching my wife's discomfiture."

"Nice thing to say. How was it?"

"She is so hard and fast about her rules about the house—won't even allow me a cigarette. Well, the chimney began in the morning and smoked all day in spite of her."

The Right License.

The Stranger—Are you quite sure that that was a marriage license you gave me last month?

The Official—Of course! What's the matter?

The Stranger—Well, I've lived a dog's live ever since.

Deceiving the Blind.

A street urchin went into a grocer's shop and asked for a quarter of a pound of tea.

"Black or green?" the grocer inquired

"It doesn't matter, mister; it's for a woman who's blind."

Highly Accomplished.

"They tell me your boy Josh is very versatile."

"He is," replied Farmer Corntossel, patiently. "I never saw anybody who could do so many fool things without repeatin' hisself."

Just the Thing.

"We are thinking of having a sack race for girls," said the manager of the excursion. "However, they are rather stale."

"Right you are. Advertise a hobble Marathon."

A Possible Reason.

"Those hanging gardens of Babylon are said to have been 300 feet in the air."

"Why did the king put them so high?"

"Perhaps the neighboring kings kept chickens."

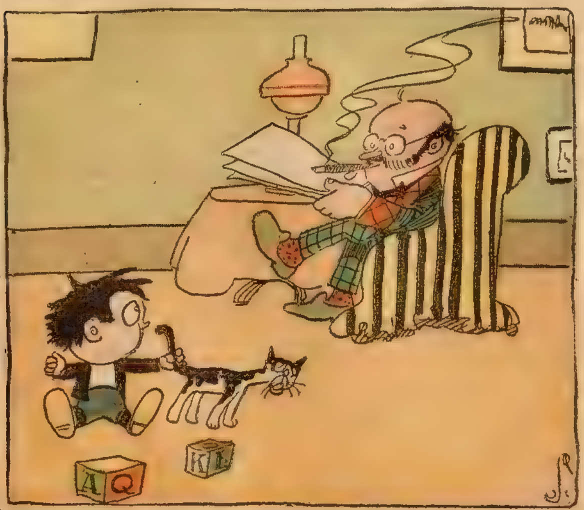
At the Dinner.

"Beastly function, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"Our hostess is the limit, isn't she? Do you know her?"

"Yes; she's my wife."



Willie Henpecke—Say, pop, Eddie Jones ast me today what your name was before mamma married you

Pride Goeth, Etc.

Professor (coming from his club, triumphantly holding up his umbrella to wife)—You see, my dear Alma, how stupid are all the anecdotes about my absent-mindedness. I haven't forgotten my umbrella.

Mrs. Professor—But, my dear, you didn't take your umbrella with you You left it at home

Future Punishment.

"George," said her husband's wife, "I don't believe you have smoked one of those cigars I gave you on your birthday."

"That's right, my dear," replied his wife's husband; "I am going to keep them until our Willie wants to learn to smoke."

Still With Him.

"Where am I?" the invalid exclaimed, waking from the long delirium of fever and feeling the comfort that loving hands had supplied. "Where am I—in heaven?"

"No, dear," cooed his wife; "I am still with you."

A Prudent Butcher.

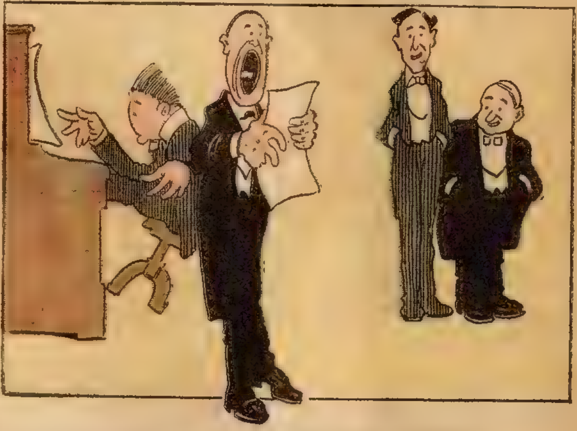
The Marketer—Aren't you wasting a good deal of that steak in trimming it?

The Butcher—No, ma'am, I weighed it first.

He Thought So.

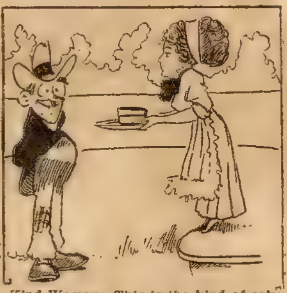
Wiggins—Do you know that your chickens come over into my yard?

Jiggins—I supposed they did, for they never come back again.



Tall One—It's too bad he can't make something out of his voice

Short One—Well, he's too proud to work as a fog horn on a lighthouse.



Kind Woman—This is the kind of cake my poor husband used to eat.

The Bo—What? Take it back! I don't want any one to be sayin' this is the kind of cake poor Wayside Willie used to eat!

Biding Her Time.

"Mamma," said little Bessie, looking wistfully into her mother's face, "may I carry the baby awhile?"

"No, indeed, my little darling; you are too young and small; you might let it fall."

"Well mamma," was her disappointed response, "then may I have it when it is worn out?"

Up Against It.

"That fellow is a source of great uneasiness to me. He may be worthy, but I wish he would keep away from my house."

"Courting your daughter, is he?"

"Naw; he's courting my cook."

That's Where.

Bill—I see that vaccination is a voting qualification in Norway.

Jill—And doesn't it make any difference where a man is vaccinated?

"Oh, yes, he's got to be vaccinated in Norway."

All in Peril.

"Something has got to be done," declared Mrs. Toots, "about this pig stealing that is going on in this neighborhood. Three pigs have disappeared within a week. It's got so now none of us are safe."

Evident.

Visitor (who had been going for the last half hour)—You know, I'm not physically strong, but I've got good staying powers.

Hostess (wearily)—Yes, we noticed that.

The Seashore Idol.

"Why, Ethel, did you notice that this seaside hotel advertises to furnish young men escorts?"

"I know the kind. They are such silly sisses that a girl feels like a chaperon every time she walks out with them."

Ready Argument.

"Sir, I am soliciting advertisements."

"Young man, my time is valuable."

"Advertise with me and your time will be so rushed with trade that your time will be twice as valuable."

HIS RELATIVES.

"You are my nearest relative,"
Said Willie to his ma;
"But when I need some money
My closest one is pa."

Sufficient Reason.

"When you saw that beastly cow, why didn't you drive her out of my garden?"

"Well, you see, sir, your garden was in the cow."—Life.

Still Tough.

"They say that all our food is adulterated."

"Maybe so. But whatever they put into this steak hasn't weakened it any."

Objects to Nightmares.

"I wish our dreams came true."

"Not me. I usually have Welsh rarebits for supper."

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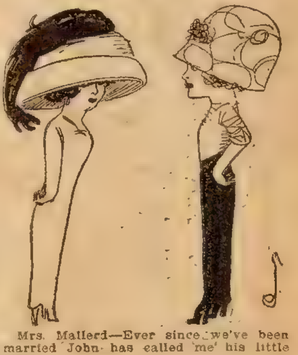

Mrs. Mallerd—Ever since we've been married John has called me his little bird.

Mrs. Dart—And what of it?

Mrs. Mallerd—Well, I always try to buy enough feathers to live up to the name.

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The Sign of the Beetle.

(Continued from page nine.)

dagger, the like of which American eyes seldom see.

It was a blade curiously twisted, with a greenish handle tipped with a brazen beetle for all the world like those which he had just been examining. Once or twice he shook his head as he ran his sallow finger along the edge of the blade to the very point, then he nodded approvingly and restored the dagger to its silk covering.

He next rose and took several quick turns about the room, the dagger lying on the table meanwhile, but he suddenly picked it up and hid it on his person

Not a sound had he emitted during these proceedings and when he had completed his preparations he seized his hat and moved across the room.

He was strangely like the man who had attacked Mr. Julius Gwin in the house in Lennox street.

He left the place, locking the door carefully behind him, and the night swallowed him up.

Catching a car, he was carried into Chrysalis street where he alighted and made his way along the pave, keeping among the shadows as much as possible.

He did not pause till he came in sight of the Marly-Grant home, which he watched for a few minutes with all eyes, his body now and then swaying back and forth with suppressed excitement.

Suddenly he dodged away and almost ran down the street. He soon turned up among the trees that fronted the so-called vacant house two removes from the lighted one he had just been inspecting.

At once his trained ears caught a sound and he turned to see a dark figure advancing toward the place. The moonlight partly revealed this figure to his watchful eyes.

A womanish form glided toward the house and, stopping, looked at it with great curiosity.

Did he know that the person whom he was watching so closely was the girl of Season street, the person whom Mrs. Marly-Grant accused of having robbed her of a son?

Kate had sought the spot of her own inclination, as if the scene of the last mystery was to give up some secret by which she could establish Russell Marly's innocence.

Kate moved among the trees, looking at the dark house in which there was no sign of tenancy. The slight breeze toyed with her tresses and her hands, hidden among the folds of her garments, were not visible.

"It was here they found the second man," the girl said to herself. "Russell came hither, but for what? If he would only speak I am sure the iron door would open to let him out. If this old house could have a tongue it would speak in his behalf, but it is as dumb as a tomb."

The statuesque man regarded the girl in his fittings and gave out no sign that he knew her.

Kate at last fell back. The old house was as mute as the grave, if it had dark secrets they were not for her.

She was turning away when her eyes, which had become accustomed to the uncertain light, fell upon the man leaning against a tree. A little cry leaped into her throat, but she stifled it and hastily drew deeper into the shadows. Why was that man there? What had brought him to that place and at that hour? Perhaps he held the great secret. His lips, if unsealed, might clear up the whole mystery.

All at once she took a step forward, but that moment the man vanished as though the earth had swallowed him. Kate stopped and held her breath.

If she had followed the man she would have seen him sneak to the rear of the house. He remained motionless there half a minute and then began to effect an entrance. This was not a great task, for the window yielded to his manipulations and he was soon in the darkness beyond.

The girl had lost her opportunity.

The man with the beetles seemed to know just where to go, for he went straight to the staircase and ascended to the upper floor. He glided down the dim corridor and found the door of the Egyptian room. He turned on no light, as if he loved gloom most, and then he drew back against the wall.

His movements had been those of a ghost. He had not disturbed the silences of that mysterious house.

Like a thug waiting in the darkness for his victim, the man of the long hands remained against the wall.

Did he know that Mrs. Marly-Grant had appointed the hour of ten for a meeting with Julius Gwin within the walls of that place? It lacked but a few minutes of the hour appointed and yet the stillness had not been broken.

Perchance Kate had gone home.

If the man thought of her, it was to wonder why she had come to the place and who she was.

Suddenly a sound fell upon the man's ears.

It came up from below, and he may have wondered if the girl had followed him into the house.

He listened and heard footsteps ascending the stair. He now moved a little pace from the door near which he had halted and resumed his nocturnal vigils.

The door opened with just the slightest squeak.

Whoever had pushed the portal ajar did not come in.

The man swallowed up in the gloom of the Egyptian chamber controlled his nerves admirably.

He caught the sound of the closing door and waited a few minutes longer.

At last he moved out into the narrow passage and found the banister of the broad staircase. Over this he leaned as if trying to pierce the darkness that fell away from his position.

There was something dangerous about this man in the dark.

Had a light flashed upon him it would have revealed a pair of eyes that marvelously snapped.

After several minutes of waiting he heard a door open beneath him.

As yet he could see no one, but he knew some person had entered the house.

"It's very dark here," said a woman's voice.

"You are right, madam."

There was a startling little cry and then silence as before.

At this the man at the top of the staircase drew back, but did not re-enter the Egyptian room.

"We will go upstairs," said the same feminine voice. "You have come at my appointment?"

"Yes, madam, I am here."

The unseen couple came up together, the man, as the watcher could imagine, slightly in advance.

In another moment they had entered the Egyptian room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WOMAN WHO FAILED

The man in the dark did not seem to care for the persons who had entered the Egyptian room, for he remained no longer at his post, but slipped noiselessly down the stair and let himself out of the house.

Julius Gwin, who had preceded the woman up the steps, opened the door for her and heard her ejaculation

"What room is this?" she asked. "You must have been here before."

"I have, madam. We are in the room of the beetles."

She did not reply, though the words must have startled her, and the next moment the detective switched on the light which revealed the place.

Mrs. Marly-Grant recoiled as the room flashed out to her vision and turned upon the detective.

"I did not know of this," said she, a look of wonderment in her eyes. "Why have you called it the room of the beetles?"

"Look at the covering of the table," replied Mr. Gwin with a sweeping gesture. "Look at the walls."

She gazed awhile in silence and then faced her companion.

"My husband's notion, no doubt," she resumed. "Or has my house become the rendezvous of some league?"

"The future may decide that. But we have not come here to discuss matters of this kind."

"That is true. I sent for you for quite another purpose."

She took a chair near the table, and Mr. Gwin followed her example.

"You are the detective who came to the house after the man had been found on the Persian rug?"

"Yes, madam."

"You are not on the case now. My husband has employed one Osbourne, a man of your calling."

A smile gathered on Mr. Gwin's lips.

"The engagement of Osbourne does not remove me from the case," he said.

"No? But you are not in my husband's employe?"

"I am not, madam."

"That is good. I shall not seek to know how far you have gone into the mysterious crime. I want you to serve me, Mr. Gwin."

Julius nodded his head, but did not speak.

"My son, who just now is in trouble connected with the murder of one, if not two, strange men became enamored of a young girl who is more or less responsible for all his mishaps. You may be aware that he was sent from home because he would not give up this creature who is undoubtedly of menial birth. I thought absence would cure him of his infatuation, but there seems to be no abatement of his love, if I may call it so, and today he is as much in the toils of that woman as ever."

Her voice was harsh, and, looking across the table, Mr. Gwin saw that her dark eyes fairly blazed with resentment.

"You may not have seen this girl," Mrs. Marly-Grant proceeded. "I have. Before our business is finished I will give you her name and address. If she can be removed, my son will come out of his trouble with flying colors, for I will help him, but so long as he clings to this foolish love, he can expect no assistance from me."

Mr. Gwin's gorge was rising. He wondered how far this haughty, revengeful woman would go.

"You say if this woman was removed——"

"Yes, that is it!" interrupted Mrs. Marly-Grant.

In what manner, madam?"

"I care little," was the cutting reply. "So long as she remains where the cast of her net falls over my son that long will the gallows stare him in the face."

"Have you ever thought, madam," said the detective, leaning forward, "that Russell Marly may be innocent?"

The look that came into the woman's eyes at this was startling. Her jeweled hand slipped across the table toward her bosom and for a minute she stared at Mr. Gwin without speaking.

"I have not thought of this," she said, speaking slowily. "Time enough for that. You work for money, do you not, Mr. Gwin? Most of your class do."

"I am used to receiving money for my services."

"I thought so. You will find me the best of pay if your work is well done."

"But, madam——"

She held up her hand and broke his sentence.

"Understand, I want no bloodshed," she said. "I have said that if this girl is out of my son's way he can have my help."

"Yes."

"He must believe that she has passed out of his life forever," she continued. "No tidings from him must reach her and not a line from her to him. You are fertile in expedients, Mr. Gwin. Your calling tells me that you have dealt with all sorts and conditions of men."

"I have had some experience," replied the detective with a display of modesty put on for the occasion.

"I thought so. Come to me within the next few days and tell me that my wishes have been carried out and you can name your price."

Mrs. Marly-Grant did not note the twinkle in the depths of Julius Gwin's eyes.

"Is it a bargain?" she exclaimed, leaning once more across the table with her gaze riveted upon her companion's face.

"There is one thing in the way, madam."

"What is that?"

"The girl may refuse to get out of the drama."

"Oh, is that all?" cried Mrs. Marly-Grant. "And you, a man of fertility, confess that you cannot handle one lone woman?"

"Some of these women are shrewd," laughed Mr. Gwin. "In fact, I have on more than one occasion found them pretty hard to handle."

In another instant the rich woman was on her feet looking derisively into the eyes of the silent detective.

"You confess your weakness, then?" she exclaimed, with a show of hauteur in which was a spice of disgust. "After all I have sent for the wrong man."

She drew back and cast a glance toward the door.

"Madam," said Julius, "there is something of more importance than the scheme which animates your bosom."

"Ah! and what is that, pray?"

"The solution of the mysteries of Chrysalis street."

"Now you are going back to the murder of those unknown men!" fell from her tongue.

"Your son has been arrested for the killing of the last one."

"I am aware of that."

"And the girl whom you want removed is fighting to save him."

"Not for me, but for her own ambitions!" cried the woman, flushing till her large face was crimson.

"She loves your son."

"You have seen this creature?"

"I have seen Miss Chalmers," said the detective quietly, but with irritating firmness. "I find her a young lady in every way worthy of your son."

"But the blood, Mr. Gwin, the blood!" was the retort.

"Perchance, madam, if some of us who

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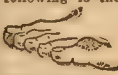

boast of our lineage could trace it back, and not so very far, either, we might find a link in the family chain not at all to our liking."

The face, red before, turned a ghastly white, and the eyes of Mrs. Marly-Grant sank for an instant before Mr. Gwin's gaze.

"This interview is ended," she said suddenly. "I'll admit that we sometimes fail in our estimates of men. I have failed tonight."

She passed around the table with her gaze never for a moment quitting the face of Julius Gwin and her hand found the handle of the door.

"Have you ever thought, madam," said the detective, taking in the room with one sweeping gesture, "who furnished this room as it stands tonight?"

"My husband, perhaps. He has been to Egypt. I am not here to discuss this."

Julius heard the click of the lock.

"Good night, Mr. Gwin. I was mistaken in my man."

"One moment, madam," he exclaimed.

"What is it?" impatiently.

"I am going to the bottom of these two crimes. Look at those beetles on the table."

He saw her gaze wander to the scarabs and rest there for a curious moment.

"There is a beetle league," he went on. "The men who were killed wore the sign of the scarab. The person who killed may wear the same symbol."

"What is all this to me, Mr. Julius Gwin?"

"It may be much or little. The end will show."

"Even if my son slew one or both these men he shall be saved, provided that girl is out of the way!" she exclaimed. "If she remains in his path, the sooner the hangman's noose chokes off his life the better for the family name!"

Was there ever such a woman?

"Madam, the family name cuts no figure with me," answered the detective, meeting her haughty gaze halfway. "If I save your son it shall be for the woman who loves him."

There was a mad cry like the snarl of a wild beast, the door opened and closed with a bang, and Julius Gwin was the sole tenant of the mysterious chamber.

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. Be wise and attend to this today.

* * *

MISTAKEN SCHEMERS.

The affair began a year after John Burton became the company's president. It was intrusted to his management for the identical reasons which had induced Robert Brant, owner of big blocks of stock, to choose him for the place—that is, ability to handle and fidelity to trust.

And Brant had come to the gist of his request without the formality of preface.

"Burton," he said, "I want you to look up a young fellow, brainy, energetic honest, an all-around one, the kind a girl would be sure to fancy."

There was no answer, and Brant, full of his plan, went on. "There isn't a young man of my acquaintance that I feel like intrusting my business to when the time comes to shift it, to say nothing of my child's happiness. And—I might as well be frank, Burton—I'm afraid Jacie rather fancies Scott Harney. Not that I object to Scott as a man, you understand. It's his age."

Chary of words, Burton nodded.

"Now, you have a better way of meeting and knowing young men than I, and I'm—in rather a hurry—on Scott's account, you see."

Burton dropped his head in his hands for a minute. "I think," he said, finally, "that I know two who would fill the bill. One of them is my sister's stepson, a civil engineer, Croy Perry. The other is a classmate of his, Thad Mosgrove, a young fellow of excellent business ability, although an artist. I'll invite them out for a month. Mosgrove will—you can have him paint Jacie's portrait, and—yes, I think we can manage it."

Robert Brant was a keen reader of men. His original judgment, augmented by daily observation, was certainly high in Burton's favor, yet he was vaguely conscious of a lack of interest, a half-heartedness, that gave him a twinge or two of disquiet.

But the plan worked to a nicety. The young men arrived pleased with the invitation and gratified to receive attentions from men like Burton and Brant. An introduction to Jacie was a matter of course and the painting of her portrait followed easily. Every day saw them and Scott Harney regular callers; Scott arriving as they left or leaving as they came.

The portrait, however, did not progress. Burton and Brant, comparing notes, decided that this augured favorably; conversation, not painting, evidently was the routine during those frequent visits. If only Scott Harney could be eliminated the equation would be quite satisfactory, Brant told Burton.

Burton, however, refrained from expressing his views, and as the month drew to its close without definite results, Brant's fear of failure led him to question Burton as to his opinion, based on his intimacy with his guests.

But Burton evaded the question. Perry and Mosgrove had not made him their confident.

Then it was that Brant decided upon a coup. Burton should have an interview with Jacie, drawing from her without arousing her suspicion, her preference. He himself, a listener, unsuspected by both, would form his conclusions from the conversation.

He made his plans with the greatest care. The coat closet should be his place of vantage. The key had been removed before Perry and Mosgrove were shown in. Their remarks, while waiting for Jacie, were interesting.

"There is simply nothing to paint," Mosgrove spoke in a guarded voice, but with a manner of one continuing a conversation. "Outside of an idiot asylum I never saw such vacancy of expression. My opinion is that she's less than half-witted. I think, Perry, that I understand. Burton and her father were trying to marry her to one of us. Scott Harney was merely a scare to hurry the matter along."

"It looks that way," Perry grudgingly assented. "Still I—Mosgrove, I never saw men I liked better."

"And I liked them," Mosgrove grumbled. "Just the kind a fellow would choose for friends. I wish—there's Harney now. Glad of it. I was rather dreading the adieus."

But the difficulty was soon over, and without embarrassment. Then they were gone, but no sooner had the latch clicked than Harney spoke.

"Nice enough boys, I daresay," he laughed, "but aren't you glad that's the last of them?"

"O, no, indeed," murmured Jacie. "They were so amusing."

Scott's mellow laugh reached the coat closet plainly. "That may be," he said, "but the minutes dragged horribly for me. I've the greatest news! Our manuscript is accepted."

Robert Brant's eye was at the keyhole. Jacie was waltzing wildly about the room, she and Scott laughing like two children.

"I wish, oh, I wish," broke in Jacie's soft voice, "that we could begin on another. How tiresome to wait till you and Annie are settled. But let's see—how would it do for me to start the story? Then you and she, when you are ready, write up to me."

"The very thing."

A minute later Scott's heels tapped smartly on the pavement, and Jacie's laugh still bubbled when the portieres swung back to admit Burton.

"Delighted, I'm sure," was her greeting. "Perhaps, though, you, like the rest, have come to say goodby."

The keyhole of the coatroom was in direct line with Jacie on the sofa. Robert Brant distinctly saw Burton draw up a chair and take Jacie's hand. Also he heard distinctly every word that was uttered. Moreover, he was struck by a peculiar quality in Burton's tones.

"Jacie," Burton began, "I wish—will you explain?—about the portrait, you know. Why—wasn't it—finished?"

"O," she said, easily, "that was because poor Mr. Mosgrove couldn't paint 'nothing.' He said so in this very room not half an hour ago. Mr. Perry agreed."

"Jacie," (Burton's voice was appealing), "I don't know what tricks you've been playing, but you've sent away two thoroughly nice men. Scott Harney—"

"He's gone, too."

"But, Jacie, it seems desirable—"

"Thanks for yours and papa's interest." She smiled sweetly. "Perhaps your next plan to secure a husband for me will be more successful."

"Burton's consternation was ludicrous. His crimsoned forehead showed beads of perspiration and his stiffened tongue could only stammer the one word 'How?'

"How?" Jacie managed to repeat. "Why, I stood behind a screen not an arm's length away, during the whole of the conspiracy. And those two dear boys! O, Mr. Burton, when I played daft you ought to have seen them. Next time—"

"There'll be no next time." Burton's tones had in them remarkable decision. "I've been so miserable, Jacie, and now I'm so happy that you've sent them all way. I'm afraid I'm too old, Jacie; if you'll take me—"

"O, quite so. I meant to all the time. If we just had papa's consent now, I should be blissfully happy."

Jacie's happiness was speedily assured, but Robert Brant's assumption of surprise upon entering the room was noticeably lacking in genuineness, and he soon went out mumbling.

Enough, however, was audible as the door closed to justify: "Just the one, by jove. Why the deuce didn't I know it long ago, and have the worry over?"

* * *

Tyrrell Ward & Co., whose ad appears on page seven of this issue, have been in business for nearly twenty years. Theirs is the old house so many are copying.

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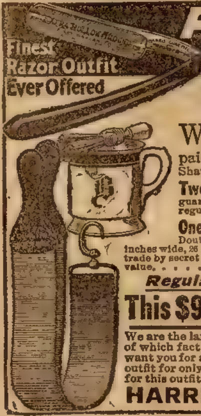

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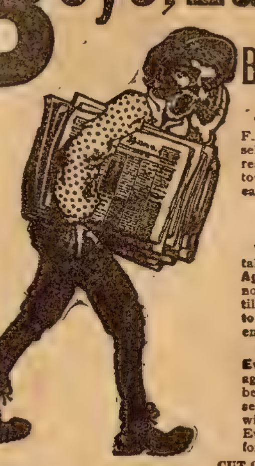

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CHAPTER VII.

IN THE TRAP.

THE old house in Richmond Lane was just the sort of trap to catch any one who got into it. Jot, the dwarf, had kept the place empty for purposes of his own, for when hunted by those whom he had offended, he could take advantage of the underground passage from his own house and shelter himself in the other one and no one would be the wiser.

Percy was so anxious to meet Roland, whom he believed to be in the house, that he did not dream of treachery. Nell had played her part like a finished actor and the Queen's page was in the danger zone.

When he had passed the threshold of the trap he closed the door behind him and waited for Roland's voice. All was darkness and this state of affairs gave Percy the first inkling of suspicion.

He kept his hand at the hilt of his sword and waited a little longer. Surely Roland had heard him enter.

At length he groped his way around a wall and found a door. As he opened it he called out:

"Roland! Roland! I am here. It is Percy!"

His voice echoed strangely in the gloom. His words came back to his ears with ghostly chatterings that sent a thrill through his whole being.

But Roland's voice did not answer.

"I am here, Roland!" he repeated in louder tones. "I got your message by Nell and have come."

A door squeaked somewhere.

In another moment a candle flared in the boy's face.

"So you've come? I'm glad to meet you, Master Sydney."

The voice and what he saw nearly swept away every vestige of color from Percy's face.

He was confronted by Jot himself in all his grotesque hideousness, his deep-set eyes snapping furiously and a pistol in his hand.

In a flash Percy saw through it all.

"Don't lift your blade if you value life!" continued the dwarf. "I am the spider and you are the fly and a fly in velvet at that. Sit down in yonder chair, please."

The menace of the pistol commanded obedience, and Percy beating down his desire to spring forward and try conclusions with the imp, sullenly obeyed.

"That is good," grinned Jot. "The girl found you and you swallowed the bait like any foolish fish."

The Queen's page did not answer.

"You nearly had me on the drawbridge," Jot went on. "Did you notice how nicely I took to water? Ha, ha! It was a clever trick on my part, don't you think?"

"It saved you from taking a cell in the Queen's Tower," replied Percy.

"To be sure it did," laughed the captor. "I came up like a duck and while the minions were scouring the moat for me I was racing away like a frightened roebuck in Sherwood Forest."

"Frightened roebucks are arrowed at last," returned Percy.

"I know, I know," said Jot. "No one has yet applied for the hundred guineas, eh, Master Percy?"

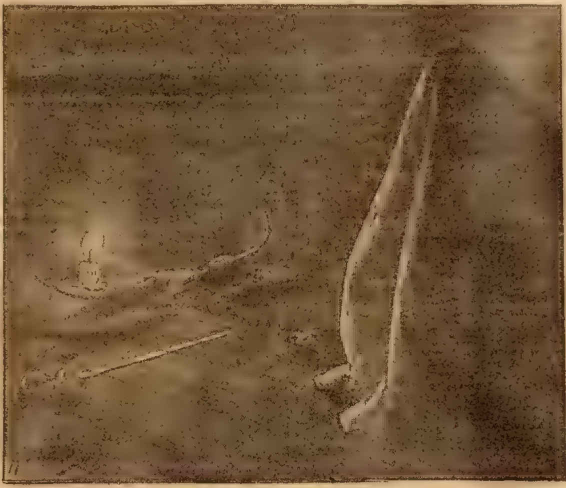
"Not yet," curtly returned the boy page.

"Maybe I'll walk into the White Tower myself some fair day and apply for them in person."

"You are too big a coward even to think of that."

"That's right. No one puts his head into the noose when he can keep it out."

A brief silence.



At length the two warriors grappled.

"Now, Master Sydney," suddenly resumed the dwarf, "you will permit me to make you fast to the chair. You have your sword yet. Please cast it away."

The good steel fell from Percy's hands. Still covering his prisoner with the pistol, Jot, move toward the wall and opened the door of the cupboard. Reaching behind him he drew out a cord with which he approached the boy in velvet.

He threw the cord deftly around Percy and suddenly drew it taut and in a minute the occupant of the chair was a prisoner indeed. A few rapid twists completed the operation and Percy was so well fastened to the chair that it was painful for him to move a muscle. After this Jot produced a long black robe from the cupboard and enveloped Percy from head to foot in its folds.

As the black garment settled over him Percy perceived that two slits in it enabled him to peer out and thus he could witness Jot's movements.

He saw the dwarf take from a shelf a powder-horn such as the musketeers carried and to his horror the imp made a trail of powder from the foot of the wall to the chair.

Where the dark trail ended Jot emptied the contents of the horn and stepped back with a grin on his distorted face.

He next proceeded to set a candle at the wall and then the full vengeance of his enemy burst upon the Queen's page. Jot intended that when the candle had burned to a certain distance it would ignite the powder and blow him up.

"Not a very nice ending for the Queen's page," Jot laughed as he looked at Percy. "You will certainly rise when the powder goes off, but not in Queen Bess' favor. I fancy that the candle will last an hour. And now, Master Sydney, I shall bid you good night."

Jot doffed his cap mockingly and fell back. Percy saw him leave the room, and when the door closed upon his persecutor hope took wings and the boy's heart seemed to pause in its tremulous beatings in his bosom.

Percy had been left to his fate.

In a moment a strange stillness took possession of the chamber. He heard the measured tread of the night guard in the street and presently the loud tones of a neighboring clock fell upon his ears. The candle was burning slowly but with a certainty that sent a chill to the young captive's heart.

He knew that Jot had gone away. He knew that he was the sole tenant of that house of doom and when he thought of the treachery of Sir Rothby Graeme in whose employ the dwarf was, and how he might carry out his plots against the Queen, consciousness almost left him.

If only Roland knew, but Roland would never know. The flashing of the powder at the foot of the chair would ignite the dark hood and his life would end in that awful place.

Once he thought he might move his chair toward his sword and by overturning the chair itself might seize his faithful weapon, but this hope suddenly deserted him, for the chair had been fastened to the floor.

He had nothing to do but to watch the candle. He could almost count the minutes of life that remained to him.

The wick burned without interruption, moving toward the floor and bringing him nearer to a doom unspeakable.

Presently a squeak fell upon his ear and he saw a huge rat emerge from its hole and sniff the air about him. The rodent caught sight of the odd looking thing in the chair and drew back, but again he came forward and ran around the room.

He was one of those enormous rats that infested the wharves of London, and Percy watched him with unabated interest. The animal ran to the train of powder, sniffed at it a moment, shook his whiskers and then stared at the candle.

Suddenly from another hole at the foot of the wall came a second rat as fierce and as large as the first. The first animal sent out a challenge at sight of his brother, and the second one without more ado accepted it and they met in combat in front of the candle.

Percy watched the fray with a gasp. They threatened to overturn the light at any moment and if they should—he shuddered at the consequences.

At length the two warriors grappled anew and fell struggling upon the deadly train. They swept the floor clean with their sleek hides. Percy would have clapped his hands had he been able to do so.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I'll never shoot another rat in the moat. Now, my good fellows, make up and be friends."

The animals had no notion of doing this, for they battled on until one slew the other and then, proud of his victory, took a long look at the captive of the chair and slunk back to his den to care for his numerous wounds.

The Queen's page, thus wonderfully rescued from a certain death cared not how soon the candle burned itself out.

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The powder train had been broken and no spark could leap the chasm.

For all this Percy was still a prisoner. He feared that Jot might return and reset his deadly train. More than once he tried his bonds, but they would not yield.

"I must! I must!" he exclaimed with each desperate wrench. "I must get out of this trap to save Queen Bess from the plots of the Spanish King's friends. I must find Roland and Janet again."

The big clock struck again and yet again. The night was passing.

Percy's limbs were sore from his twistings, he could hardly breathe within the garment which Jot had thrown over him.

At last a ray of hope appeared. The chair moved. He exerted all his remaining strength and finally with a cry of victory tore it from its fastenings. At that moment the burning wick fell to the floor, a few powder sparks ignited and then the room was dark. But for the rats he would at that moment have been nameless.

When he had rested a minute Percy toppled the chair to the floor and moved it toward the spot where his sword lay. He managed by degrees to get it in his shackled hands, then with the aid of his teeth he worked its keen edge up and down against the cords.

It was slow work, but he did not desist for a moment.

When the cords were severed he could have uttered a cry. He swept the hood from his person and rose to his feet.

Free at last!

The Queen's page sprang to the door by which Jot had left the chamber, but it resisted every endeavor of his strength.

In vain he tugged at it, his breath came hard, his muscles stood out like whipcords; he must escape, he must.

From the door he went to the one window of the room, but it had iron bars that would resist a giant. No use to waste his strength on them.

Then he wished that Jot would come. He was ready for his old enemy now. With his good sword he was the dwarf's equal, and if the imp had opened the door he would have received the blade fairly in his treacherous heart.

To be free and yet a prisoner galled young Percy.

He flew to the window again and paused there. There were voices outside.

The boy page beat on the heavy bars. He called for help.

"What's that, Jock?" cried one of the voices. "There's a madman in the house. Come, I must be going," and to Percy's despair he heard the twain take to their heels.

Hope and deliverance speedily took wings. Queen Bess' favorite recoiled with a cry and finding the chair in the dark sank into it with a sigh.

CHAPTER VIII.

ROLAND TAKES A HAND.

Meantime Roland had discovered that Nell Archer had sent him upon a deceptive mission. The youth rode post haste to Hampstead Heath only to learn that there was no house at the point designated by the girl and he was confronted by a mystery which he could not solve. When he returned home and consulted Janet, the girl suggested that in some way it indicated a plot against Percy, who was known to have incurred the ill will of the Spanish spies, and Roland finally took up with this idea.

He resolved to find Percy, and knowing that the boy page had told him how he could be reached even when he was in the Tower, he posted away with the intention fresh in his mind.

His call across the moat was answered by the guard on duty at the lower gate and he besought the man to inform Percy that his friend Roland wished to see him.

Roland waited for some time and was finally told that Percy was not in the Tower. He was forced to go back and look for the young page elsewhere.

There was an inn known as the Ship and Anchor wither Percy often went to learn the gossip of the day, and he repaired thither. His entrance occasioned no comment, and presently he was seated in one corner of the large room from which he could survey all of it.

Percy of course was not visible.

If Roland had known the truth he would have hurried to the old house in Richmond Lane where his friend was imprisoned, but there was no one to enlighten him.

He was about to quit the place, when who should swagger in as large as life but Jarvis Tetton. That worthy had recovered from the slight wound which Percy had inflicted, and now looked as well as ever.

Roland eyed him anxiously.

Jarvis without noticing the boy took a bench near by and was soon joined by another man with whom he entered into conversation. Percy's friend bent an eager ear toward them.

"We are coming on finely," he heard Jarvis say. "It won't be long till Queen Bess' subjects will cease to laugh at the Armada. She has set spies at our heels but we are getting rid of them as fast as possible. I had an altercation with one of these fellows lately and got the worst of it," he laughed. "It's the first time my skin has been pricked by cold steel in a long time."

"What!" cried the other, "you haven't been wounded?"

"Yes, the boy—for boy he was—wields a good blade, and but for a little nervousness on his part, I might not be here now."

A miss is as good as a mile," was the laughing rejoinder.

"Well, mine wasn't a mile's miss," said Jarvis in no pleasant tone. "I don't care to have the act repeated. But I've got my eyes on the boy who happens to be Queen Bess' favorite, and one of these days I'll show him that all the old wolves haven't shed their teeth."

Roland knew that the rascal referred to Percy and he resolved to tell him at the first opportunity.

"By the way," said Jarvis' friend, "they haven't caught our ally, Jot, yet?"

"Nay, and they will not catch that little imp very soon," was the answer. "I fancy that Jot has a burrow they wot not of, and he will see that their sharp eyes do not find it."

"The reward has been posted all over the city."

"I have read it more than once," said Jarvis. "Everybody seems to be scouring the city for Jot."

"And he will do well, I'm thinking, to keep his neck out of the halter."

"Trust Jot to outwit all the hounds, Mascal," grinned Jarvis as he drained his mug. "They will find the house in Richmond Lane empty if they look for him there. His friend Nell will keep him posted."

Roland started.

He remembered that the girl who had sent him to Hampstead Heath was named Nell, and now he had discovered that she was an ally of the dwarf.

Matters were becoming decidedly interesting he thought.

The following moment Jarvis rose and the two passed out of the place.

Their exit was so sudden that Roland looked around to ascertain the cause of it when he beheld a man whom he know to be very close to the Queen. This person was the hawk who had flushed the quarry, and Roland smiled to himself as he caught a farewell glance of Tetton and his companion.

"If I could but run across the girl who sent me on that foolish mission," he thought, "I would pay a good deal of attention to her."

He passed out of the Ship and Anchor and betook himself to Richmond Lane in hopes of running across Nell Archer. He hardly expected that good fortune, but what was his surprise when he suddenly caught sight of her bargaining for some oranges at a street stand.

"Ho, Mistress Nell!" thought Roland, drawing back among the shadows. "I'm in the heyday of luck. You look as pretty as ever, but I'm not just now riding to Hampstead, so I'll devote a little time to yourself."

When the girl had completed her purchase she whisked away with the youth at her heels. He saw her disappear in the darkness and as she did not come forth again he felt sure that she had gone to Jot's hiding place.

He loitered about the vicinity for some time and at last Nell reappeared and made off.

This time Roland tracked her to an imposing mansion, the steps of which she mounted. The door was opened at her summons and she vanished inside.

A moment later a man came by and Roland made bold to accost him.

"Would you tell me, friend, who inhabits yon mansion?" he asked.

"I thought everybody knew who lives there," was the reply as the man looked Roland over from head to foot. "Why, sir, that is the home of the Princess Dawn."

"Ho!" cried Roland. "I forgot that her Grace lived there," and the man passed on.

The boy was now more puzzled than ever. What business such a girl as Nell Archer, the companion of the dwarf, Jot, could have with a high-born lady like the Princess Dawn was more than Roland could figure out. He longed to see beyond the great doors of the mansion, but he dared not make the attempt.

He lingered about the place till the door swung open again and Nell came out bearing a basket covered with a white cloth.

"I see," said the boy to himself. "She is taking some dainties to Jot."

Once more he set himself upon the girl's trail. Nell did not suspect and when she found herself jostled by a crowd of people and was trying to edge her way through it, Roland bounded forward and deftly lifted one end of the cloth. It was just as he had suspected—the basket was filled with dainties of all kinds, and he was about to drop the cloth when a bit of folded paper attracted his attention.

Roland could not resist the temptation to purloin the paper and soon had it in his hands. Then, still following Nell, he waited till he reached one of the few street lights in London when he drew the stolen letter from his pocket.

"My Dear Friend," he read, "I am glad you are outwitting the Queen's spies. Do not put your head out of doors till the wind blows from the right direction. I am sending you some sweetmeats from my private table. It gives me pleasure to know, as Nell tells me, that you have trapped the little fox of the Tower. Your friend, THE PRINCESS DAWN."

The solution of the mystery concerning Percy's whereabouts burst upon Roland like a lightning bolt from the clear blue. He was in Jot's power!

At first Roland thought of hunting up some of the Queen's musketeers and taking them to the house from which he had followed Nell, but he gave over this idea.

The girl tripped along, now and then humming a song which occasionally reached his ears, and she would look into the basket as if eager to feast on the good things it contained.

All at once Nell was stopped by a brace of roysterers who insisted upon looking into her basket.

These fellows had tarried too long in some coffee house and, while they were not out-and-out robbers, they did not hesitate to appropriate certain things to their own uses.

"I warrant you have something good under that cloth," cried one of the pair, pointing to the basket.

"Whatever I carry is not mine," insisted Nell, as she looked about for an avenue of escape.

"That makes little difference with us so they are appetizing," was the response. "Look here, Wat. Here's a frosted cake, some custard, a tempting roast and, by my life! a bottle of wine!"

Nell with a cry jerked away and hugged the wall of a house.

"They're for my master," she exclaimed.

"Oh, he can wait. We haven't supped yet and then our purses could never buy such a feast as you carry, miss. What will you have, Wat, the roast or the custard?"

"My stomach says roast," was the grinning reply, and a great hand dived into the basket and drew forth a leg of veal which was lifted above the thief's head.

"Come, good gentlemen," cried Nell, "my master is ill. He has been forced to fast for a week——"

"We've fasted a fortnight," cut in one of the rascals. "My doctor prescribes roast veal, but I haven't had the money to buy it."

This was more than Roland could stand. He hastened forward and his ringing voice was the first sign the pair had of his proximity.

"You shall not rob the young miss," he exclaimed as he drew his sword. "I

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doubt not she speaks the truth. Restore what you have taken at once."

The two fellows gazed at Roland with open mouths. They were not armed and the sight of the youth's steel brought them to their senses.

The roast was restored to Nell's basket and the pair took to their heels without ceremony.

"I'm much obliged to you," said the girl, looking at Roland who had drawn his cap over his eyes to prevent recognition. "But for you I would have been plundered by those night hawks."

"I'm glad to have been of service to you," gallantly replied the youth. "London just now is full of such scoundrels. I warrant they are some of those who are just now wishing that the Armada was at the bottom of the sea."

"Then you wish the Armada well?" asked Nell.

"Why not, miss? The Queen rules us with an iron hand. May I not accompany you to your destination, for you may again be insulted by roysterers like the ones I have just driven off."

Nell, who had not as yet recognized Roland, accepted his escort and he walked along beside her. At length she stopped and said:

"I am home, sir. This is where my master lives."

She was about to mount the step when Roland seized her arm.

"A truce to deception, Mistress Nell," he cried, raising his cap. "I am your late dupe. You must tell me where Percy is, or I shall raise my voice and call the night-watch."

The basket almost dropped from Nell's hands. She was stupefied.

CHAPTER IX.

TOO LATE.

Nell Archer's face grew white when she looked into Roland's eyes.

She believed that the boy meant every word he said and she was the last person who wanted to fall into the hands of the night-watch. At the same time she was eager to shield Jot, the dwarf, and when she reflected that she had decoyed Percy into the imp's snares and that even then Jot might have dealt harshly with him, she did not know what to do.

"Come," cried Roland, unable to curb his impatience for he believed by the girl's silence she was seeking to trick him, "I will not wait long on you. Where is Percy, the Queen's page?"

"How should I know?" demanded Nell.

"Who should know better than yourself? You sent me on a fruitless mission to Hampstead and I now believe that it was for the purpose of getting rid of me while you tricked Percy. Is it not so?"

Nell did not speak.

"It's the night-watch, then," said the boy, seizing her arm tighter than before. "It is the truth or arrest!"

"He may be in the fourth house below this one," she stammered at last.

"You speak as though you are not sure he is there."

"I say he may be there," she iterated. "I cannot tell what has happened since he entered the house."

"Then whose house is this one?" Roland looked up at the forbidding building as he spoke.

"I will not tell you."

"You need not, Mistress Nell," laughed the youth. "I know who these good things from the larder of the Princess Dawn are for."

"You know?"

"Yes, for here is the note I filched from your basket awhile ago."

"You are a thief!" flashed Nell, coloring.

"Not all the time," smiled Roland. "At any rate, I am not a go-between for the Spanish conspirators."

He suddenly released Nell and bolted off.

If Percy was in the fourth house he would find him even if he risked his life in the attempt.

He did not look to see whether Nell entered the other house, but he took it for granted that she did so and even then was telling her story to Jot.

He found the old house closely shuttered and still inside. There was nothing to tell whether it was inhabited or not, but the silence alarmed him. If Percy was there it must be as a prisoner, if not a corpse, and this thought sent Roland's blood in cold waves through his veins.

He tried the knob of the door, but it was as firm as adamant. Then he ran to one side of the house where he found a narrow gate which admitted him to the back garden.

The door which greeted him there was as immovable as the one in front, but in his excitement he hammered on it till a thin voice reached his ears.

"Is that you, Percy?" he cried.

"It is I," was the response which seemed to come from a great distance.

Roland threw himself against the door, but it would not yield.

"I am Roland!" he cried to cheer the young prisoner. "Where are you, Percy?"

"I am in the large room to the left of the front door. I am shut in by bolts and locks. This is Jot's house."

"It is the den of the dwarf," Roland responded. "I shall call the night-watch."

"Not if you can get in without that," Percy answered.

Roland drew back and began to search the garden. At once he discovered a billet of wood which he caught up with eagerness and returned to the door.

"The stick may force the lock," he thought to himself, but it took half a dozen good blows to make the least impression on the stubborn portal.

"Ho, there, young house breaker," said a voice behind him. "This is my property and I haven't given you authority to tear it down."

Roland whirled at the first word and found himself confronting a large man in doublet and hose with a cap set jauntily on his head. He also noticed that he carried a short dress sword at his side.

"If it is your house then why do you permit my friend Percy to be imprisoned in it?" Roland demanded.

"The house is empty, sirrah," was the reply. "It hasn't had a tenant since last May Day———"

"But it has one now if the girl told the truth."

"What girl?"

"Nell Archer she calls herself."

The man placed his fat hands on his hips and laughed uproariously.

"What, that minx?" he cried. "You can't believe anything she says. She's the great story teller of the neighborhood. Come, sir. You have already damaged my door. Take out your purse or settle or——"

"Or what?" put in the defiant boy.

"Or I shall hale you before the magistrate and he'll give you time to reflect in jail."

Roland was thinking fast.

"Open the door and let us see if Nell Archer has deceived me," he began.

"I haven't carried the keys of the house for six months."

"Very well. Then I shall beat the door down."

Roland raised the billet when the heavy hand of the man fell upon his shoulder.

"You shall interview the magistrate," he growled, knocking the stick from the boy's grasp.

Roland with a sudden wrench tore himself loose and, backing off, drew his sword.

"Oh, that is your game, eh?" cried the stranger. "I don't object to taking a winged night hawk before his honor."

At the same time the speaker whipped out his own weapon, but the next instant by a sudden pass which was not anticipated, Roland sent it flying into a clump of weeds.

"You play like an old hand," grunted the big man. "Who gave you lessons?"

"Toby Nimble, the armorer."

"Marry, you don't seem to have forgotten them."

"Now will you let me in the house?" Roland exclaimed.

Instead of replying the big man appeared to look for his sword, but instead of recovering it, he picked up the billet of wood which he suddenly hurled at Roland with all the savagry of his nature. The boy tried to dodge it, but it struck him a glancing blow and he fell against the door.

In another moment he was in the man's clutches.

"The magistrate first," growled his captor, and Roland was dragged toward the street.

The thought that he was leaving Percy to his doom nearly turned his brain.

As they reached the pave the heavy tread of the night-watch making its rounds fell upon Roland's ears.

The man looked down the street and paused.

"Come," he cried, starting off once more with his prisoner. "I won't be seen by the watch."

"I don't believe that house is yours. You are a common robber. I shall tell the watch."

The last word had scarcely left Roland's tongue ere he was thumped on the head by the man's iron fist and thrown to the stones. The following moment his persecutor bolted off and vanished.

Roland was half dazed when the watch came along, but by degrees he made himself understood.

"Did the man wear a dark doublet and yellow hose?" asked the captain of the guard.

"Yes."

"And a cap that looked too small for his head?"

"Yes, yes," answered Roland.

"Then he was Robin, the house breaker, and a man for whom we have been looking these many nights. But how came you in this part of the city lad? You don't live here?"

"No, my friend is a prisoner in that house. I came hither to rescue him."

The captain of the watch looked at his companions and then at Roland as though he doubted his word.

"I might search the house. I have that authority, boy," he said at length.

"And the sooner you do so the better," Roland cried. "Percy is in the big room to the left of the door, as his voice told me."

The night-watch mounted the steps, but the door would not yield to him.

"I had the rear door loosened when the robber came upon me," Roland said.

The little squad trooped into the garden, Roland at its heels, and a few blows with the billet sent the door splintered from its hinges.

One of the men turned his night lantern upon the interior of the place and all looked around.

"Ah, there's a door!" cried the captain. "If your friend is in the house we shall turn him loose."

The second door was locked, but was soon broken down and all poured into a large room.

"This must be the place," the watch said.

Roland held his breath whilst he looked around. A chair stood in the middle of the room, near it lay a mangled rat and against the wall were the remains of a burned out candle.

"He's not here," the watch said, turning upon Roland.

"But he has been here," was the reply. "See! There is a rope on the floor by the chair. And what is that dark streak on the boards?"

"Bless us, it is powder!" cried one of the guard.

The captain of the watch laughed.

"An empty chair, a rope, a dead rat, a burnt candle and powder on the floor!" he cried. "I don't understand all this."

"Percy has been taken away by some one," Roland cut in. "He was here when I came, for I heard his voice. If the robber hadn't interfered with my attack on the door I might have rescued him."

"Who is your friend?"

"He is Percy Sydney, Queen Bess' favorite page."

"Say you so? This may be a Spanish plot, boy. The city is full of such just now."

"Percy's enemies are King Philip's friends," Roland answered.

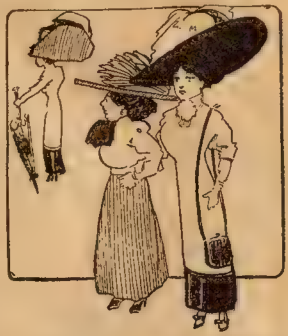
The night-watch nodded his head thoughtfully.

"Well, we must be going the rounds," he said after a little silence. "Master Sydney is not here now. That's as plain as a pikestaff. Are you going to remain, lad?"

"No," said Roland. "Percy has been taken from this room within the last few minutes. It was the girl who betrayed me to her master. I shall go to the White Tower and see Queen Bess, and woe to those who have laid evil hands on Percy Sydney!" and with these words Roland tramped out of the house of the trap at the heels of the night-watch.

This story, developing very thrilling happenings, will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming year.

* * *



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BUYING THE RING.

This is the season when the thoughts of many young men and women turn to engagement rings and wedding rings, says a writer in the New York Sun. Good form still requires that the man shall select the engagement ring or appear to select it. Nevertheless, the young woman usually has a good deal to say on the subject. At leading jewelry stores which deal only in high-class stones perhaps one-half of the total number of engagement rings sold are purchased by young men who come in alone and carry off the rings with them. This does not prove necessarily that the preferences of the young women for whom the rings are intended have not been consulted in advance.

In one case a young man who purchased at a well-known establishment a fine solitaire engagement ring appeared a week later and asked anxiously if he might exchange it.

"Why, of course. Nothing easier," he was assured. Whereupon he told his story to the salesman.

No sooner, it seems, had the young woman said yes than the young man, without waiting to consult her taste, rushed off to buy the engagement ring, which he presented to her without getting quite the looked-for results. The young woman admired the ring tremendously—no woman could do otherwise; but the giver thought he detected a slight reservation in her tone, a hint of disappointment in her eye, and after some coaxing it developed that she had set her heart on a ruby when she should become engaged. Of course, the young woman got a ruby ring.

The other day a young man called up a junior member of a well-known jewelry concern and said to him:

"I expect to drop in tomorrow afternoon with a lady to look at rings. Maybe you can imagine what's going to happen; but you must not appear to know anything."

"Of course not," come back over the phone. "Besides, you haven't told me anything."

"Just so," continued the other. "I shall not buy the ring, you understand, till the next day."

Dropping in casually at the time named, the junior partner when presented to the lady proceeded as a matter of course to show trays full of fine rings, to talk rings and to find out which ring to hold in reserve.

"The man knew that I knew," said the jeweler in telling the story, "his fiancee was also aware probably of what was going on, and yet the conventions were observed, the man coming back alone the day after to buy the ring.

"A case which happened last week illustrates another up-to-date way of buying an engagement ring. The man in the case, who often had been in the store, appeared and with my help selected a ring which he asked to have put on one side till he brought in a lady to look at it. As usual, I was asked not to appear wise as to what was going on.

"Quite early the next morning in came a young woman whose people have been customers of our for years. She said to me, speaking confidentially:

"'I understand that you have a ring put away for me to look at this afternoon, but I want to see it now. Do show it to me."

"Naturally I could not refuse, and after admiring the ring to her heart's content the young woman begged me to promise not to tell her fiance of her visit that morning nor to indicate that she and I had ever met before. I promised.

"When the two arrived later in the day, the lady acted her part beautifully; was very gracious when I was presented, and raved over the ring, which presumably she saw for the first time. It was a very pretty little bit of comedy, which I enjoyed as much as she did.

"One hour after the two had sauntered out the man rushed in again, paid for the ring and carried it off to put on the girl's finger, I suppose. Again the conventions were preserved.

"As a rule when a young man and his fiancee come together to buy a costly ring we know they are not New Yorkers. In their own town or city, where they are known, probably they would not be seen together on such an errand, but coming, to a city and a store where they are not known gives them courage to fly in the face of engagement ring etiquette.

"Often a young man will ask to look at the rings in a private room or at the back of the store, and sometimes we suggest that he do this if he looks particularly bashful.

"When a young man appears and asks in sort of a low voice to look at ladies' rings we refrain carefully from asking leading questions. To do this at first might be fatal to a sale. We take extra pains though to point out best designs in different styles, including engagement rings, and before long, with the proper encouragement the customer will get confidential and tell something about the girl, her tastes, etc., and ask for advice concerning the ring.

"Good taste demands that the young woman shall not come first to prospect for a ring, whatever she may do afterward. It is the man who takes the initiative."

Then as to the design. The solitaire, one stone meaning a unitl typical of a happily married pair, is eminently fitting, says a jeweler. To use two or three stones of equal size in an engagement ring is for the time being frowned on. One stone only should be prominent, whether ruby, pearl, diamond or other gem.

At one time a large stone bordered with a circle of small diamonds was among the most popular designs offered for engagement rings, and there are persons who prefer this design now. It was superseded by a solitaire set high above a very narrow hoop and without any small diamonds. The design is still in vogue.

Newer than this and considered smartest of all for the time being is a solitaire set high, the shank of the ring on either side and below the large stone decorated with a lot of very small diamonds set close to the metal.

Although jewelers say there is very little prospect of a return to the more or less ornate wedding rings of a few centuries back, there have been individual cases in the last few years in which the wedding ring was far removed from the plain gold band now prescribed by custom.

"The modern wedding ring of fashion," said he, "is designed to be inconspicuous rather than conspicuous and,'—with a quizzical expression—"it is not necessary to put such lasting qualities into it.

"As a matter of fact, these narrow wedding bands are as thick in most cases as the half-inch-wide variety was and instead of costing about $20 they cost $5 or less. The flat style wedding ring is not at all popular now, and the fashion of inscribing posies inside the ring, which was handed down from the sixteenth century, at which time wedding rings were inscribed often inside and outside, is practically obsolete. When I started in business thirty years ago it was not uncommon to be asked to inscribe some loving sentiment inside a wedding ring together with the wearer's initials and the date of the marriage. Of late years the initials and date alone seem to be required; often there is no inscription at all.

"An exception occurred a few weeks ago when a man who had purchased a wedding ring brought it back to have engraved on the inner surface: 'Death only parts two loving hearts.'

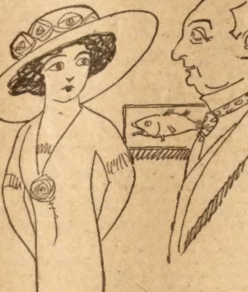
A book descriptive of early wedding ring fashions which I used to keep handy for romantic persons wanting to follow old customs contains somewhere between two hundred and three hundred quaint couplets which once were used in wedding rings, some of which now figure in antique collections. One of the oddest I remember, spelling included, and which is never asked for now ran: 'Faithful ever, deceitful never.' Others I can recall were: 'A virtuous wife preserveth life.,' 'Our loves be so no ending know' and 'True love is the bond of peace.'

"It is not likely that anything will replace the gold wedding ring for the reason, as is often pointed out by clergymen and writers, that gold is the most precious metal and that the plain circle without break or end describes the finality of the wedding bond."

The practice of exchanging wedding rings, once customary with the Germans only, is coming into vogue with Americans to some extent, it is said, the ring for the man being a facsimile of the woman's ring.

Read Tyrrell Ward & Co.'s great offer on page seven this issue.

* * *



"How big are the fish you catch at your camp?"

"O, as big as I can get anybody to believe."

* * *

A SERENADE.

A youth went forth to serenade
  The lady he loved best,
And by her home at evening
  When the sun had gone to rest
He warbled until daylight,
  And would have warbled more,
But morning light disclosed a sign,
  "To Let," upon the door.

* * *

A man who insists that he's just as good as you may not be extra good at that.

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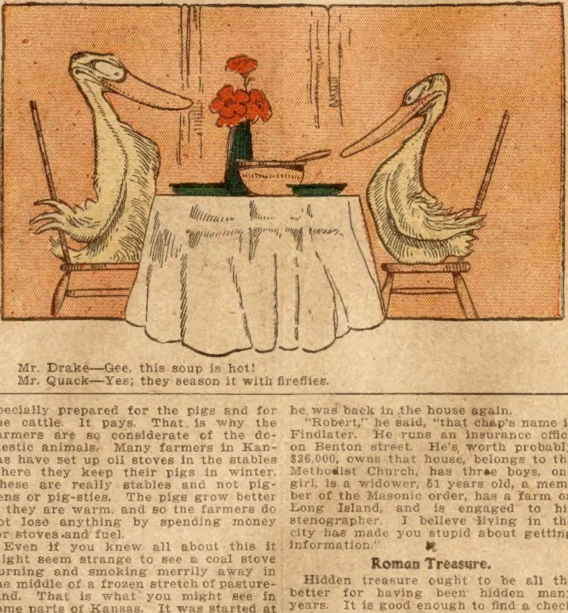

Mr. Drake—Gee, this soup is hot!
Mr. Quack—Yes; they season it with fireflies.

LULLABY OF THE IROQUOIS

Little brown baby bird, lapped in your nest,
Wrapped in your nest,
Strapped in your nest,
Your straight little cradle board rocks you to rest
Its hands are your nest,
Its bands are your nest,
It swings from the down bending branch of the oak,
You watch the camp flame and the curling gray smoke;
But, O, for your pretty black eyes sleep is best.
Little brown baby of mine, go to rest.
Little brown baby bird swinging to sleep,
Winging to sleep,
Singing to sleep,
Your wonder black eyes that so wide open keep,
Shielding their sleep,
Unyielding to sleep,
The heron is homing, the plover is still,
The night owl calls from his haunt on the hill,
Afar the fox barks, afar the stars peep,
Little brown baby of mine, go to sleep.

❧

Pigs in Clover.

The old song about the people that kept the pig in the parlor is not so funny as some people have seemed to think it is. Out in Kansas they come pretty near to doing this, though the parlors are specially prepared for the pigs and for the cattle. It pays. That is why the farmers are so considerate of the domestic animals. Many farmers in Kansas have set up oil stoves in the stables where they keep their pigs in winter. These are really stables and not pigpens or pig-sties. The pigs grow better if they are warm, and so the farmers do not lose anything by spending money for stoves and fuel.

Even if you knew all about this it might seem strange to see a coal stove burning and smoking merrily away in the middle of a frozen stretch of pastureland. That is what you might see in some parts of Kansas. It was started at the State Agricultural College, where some method of providing the cattle with warm drinking water was found necessary. Cold water is as bad for cows as it is for boys and girls. It hurts the digestion and it sometimes makes children's stomachs ache. It keeps the cows from giving as much milk as they should give. The teachers at the college knew this, and so they rigged up a stove to keep the water warm all winter in the pasture-lot. They got a stove that was waterproof, and they fixed it in the middle of the big drinking trough so that coal could be put in at the top and the ashes taken out below the bottom of the tank. There is a piece of stove-pipe sticking up in the air for a chimney. The stove is always kept full of fire in cold weather, and the cows gather about it and drink the water, which never freezes.

❧

Almost a Tragedy.

A little dog that lives in Felton, Pa., was run over by a fast passenger train on the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad and did not get hurt in any way except in his feelings. He was frightened, but it is not a queer thing to be frightened when a train has run over you, if there is anything left of you to be frightened with. The little dog was running along the ties between the tracks, and did not care who was whistling at him to make him get out of the road. He was going to stay there just as long as he pleased and not be afraid of the noise at his back, though it was a loud noise and growing every moment. Then, all of a sudden, the noise was so loud and so near that he crouched down in terror, and in an instant there was a great rush of something over him. It seemed ages to the little dog before that rushing stopped, and then he was out in the quiet world again and the noise was going away in the far distance. He did not stop to be thankful that the train had passed over him without hurting him. He took to his heels and made the straightest of straight lines for home.

❧

Getting the Facts.

"Robert," said Uncle Henry, who was visiting his city nephew, "who's that man in the house on the other side of the street? He stands in front of his window and shaves himself every morning. He's done it now for three days runnin'."

"And he's probably done it for the last ten years, for all I know, uncle," replied Robert, in a tone that lacked interest.

"Has he lived there all that time?"

"Yes; and longer than that, I suppose. He was there when I came here ten years ago."

"Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"What does he do?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, uncle."

Whereupon Uncle Henry put on his hat and went out. In about fifteen minutes he was back in the house again.

"Robert," he said, "that chap's name is Findlater. He runs an insurance office on Benton street. He's worth probably $26,000, owns that house, belongs to the Methodist Church, has three boys, one girl, is a widower, 51 years old, a member of the Masonic order, has a farm on Long Island, and is engaged to his stenographer. I believe living in the city has made you stupid about getting information."

❧

Roman Treasure.

Hidden treasure ought to be all the better for having been hidden many years. It is good enough to find a check under your plate at breakfast, but it is better to find money that has been forgotten for centuries.

Mr. Banet is the landlord of the inn at Bonpas, a little town away down in the corner of France, where nothing except the Pyrenees Mountains separates that country from Spain and the queer little republic of Andorra. Mr. Banet is a lucky man, for one day he dug up an old earthenware jar, and in the jar he found hundreds of ancient coins. The coins have been examined by men who know about such things, and they have been found to be of Roman manufacture and eighteen to nineteen centuries old. There are some silver pieces, and the rest are bronze.

❧

CLEANING HOUSE.

Dolly's clothes are on the line,
Dolly's dishes fairly shine;
Dolly's home is swept all through,
Chairs and tables look like new.
Dolly's little mother, May,
Has been cleaning house today.

Picture books, a goodly row,
Such a pretty order show;
Games and blocks all put in place,
Pencils in the drawing case.
"I'm so tired," say Bob and May,
"We've been cleaning house today."

❧

We ask you particularly to cut out the free coupon at the lower right hand corner of page seven this issue.

Consumption Book FREE

200 PAGE MEDICAL BOOK ON CONSUMPTION

This valuable medical book tells in plain, simple language how consumption can be cured in your own home. If you know of any one suffering from Consumption, Catarrh, Bronchitis, Asthma or any throat or lung trouble, or are yourself afflicted, this book will help you to a cure. Even if you are in the advanced stage of the disease and feel there is no hope, this book will show you how others have cured themselves after all remedies they had tried failed, and they believed their case hopeless.

Write at once to The Yonkerman Company, 4942 Water Street, Kalamazoo, Mich., and they will gladly send you the book by return mail free and also a generous supply of the New Treatment, absolutely free, for they want every sufferer to have this wonderful remedy before it is too late. Don't wait, write today. It may mean the saving of your life.

SICK Suffering WOMEN!

I WANT YOU TO GET WELL.

Send for my FREE HOME TREATMENT, it will help you right away. Ovarian Troubles, Pains in the Back and Bowels, Leuchorrhœa, Dysmenorrhœa, Piles, Inflammation of the Bladder, Headache, Hot Flashes, and all diseases which pulls women down and makes them miserable and unfit for motherhood, will VANISH like MAGIC. There is no use of you suffering untold agony any longer; tell me where the pain is and I will help you quickly. Address

DR. C. L. HOLLOWAY, ST. JOSEPH, MO.

RUPTURE CURED

I was helpless and bed-ridden for years from a double rupture. No truss could hold. Doctors said I would die if not operated on. I fooled them all and cured myself by a simple discovery. I will send the cure free by mail if you write for it.

Capt. W. A. Collings, Box 699, Watertown, N. Y.

LADIES MAKE $3.00 to $5.00 DAILY selling Dress Goods, Skirts and Handkerchiefs. Free Outfit. No capital required.
MUTUAL FABRIC COMPANY, Dept. 364, Binghamton, N. Y

FUTURE, past, present revealed. Send dime; birthdate. Can astonish you. Madam Irene, 115 Second St., Kewanee, Ills.

TAPE-WORM EXPELLED WITH HEAD. FREE BOOKLET. BYRON FIELD & CO. 120 So. STATE ST., CHICAGO, ILL.

MONEY Made quickly by smart men T. Artol Co., 116 Nassau St., N. Y.

A Faithful Friend.

There is one friend who will never fail you while you have hands to move and a brain to plan. In your dreariest hours she will be your sweet refuge, and in times of prosperity she will guard you from "the pride which goeth before a fall." She will bring you long nights of restful sleep at the end of your busy days, and when other friends grow careless or disdainful, she will absorb you more and more. Her name is Work, and neither the highest nor the lowest can be happy for long without her.

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To Buy, Sell or Exchange any kind of Real Estate or Personal Property advertise in Boyce's Exchange. Costs $1.85 per line for insertion in both the Blade and Ledger. Adv. Dept., 500 Dearborn Avenue, Chicago

OBESITY TREATMENT

REDUCE YOUR WEIGHT. INTERESTING BOOK and Proof Treatment mailed absolutely free to any over-stout person. Quick, safe, reliable, lasting reduction, wonderful improvement in health and appearance. Dr. H. C. Bradford, 20 E. 22nd St., 9 C. New York, N. Y.

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LEARN AUTOMOBILE BUSINESS. HOME Lessons. $25.00 weekly job guaranteed. $10.00 weekly while learning. Rochester Auto School, 2051 Rochester, N. Y.

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$7.75 PAID for rare date 1853 quarters; $20 for a $½. Keep all money dated before 1880, and send 10c at once for new illustrated Coin Value Book, 4x7. It may mean your fortune. C. F. Clarke Co., Dept. 10, Le Roy, N. Y.

FARMS FOR SALE

MONEY-MAKING FARMS throughout 15 states; great variety, size and price. Stock and tools included with many to settle estates quickly. Mammoth Illustrated Catalogue No. 34 free. E. A. Strout, Station 3040, Old Colony Building, Chicago, Ill.

The Cub's Choice.

(Continued from Page Two.)

head to toe, it came to him that he was assigned to a bank embezzlement story of some kind by the Star. Odd, wasn't it? He wondered if it could be the same.

He'd ask Terry just as soon as he saw him what the name of the bank was in his assignment. If it was the Nineteenth National—that was where Mabel's father was employed—then it was a practical certainty that he, the sweetheart of the daughter, was engaged in helping to publish her father to the world as an embezzler.

He fairly shuddered at the embarrassing situation. Once he felt tempted to bolt his assignment with Terry and quit the Star on the spot. But the mystery in the case, added to his desire to effect some good service that would reinstate him in the graces of City Editor Armstrong and help to save his job served to hold him to his task.

Reaching the Fifth avenue corner at which Terry had instructed him to join him, Hastings glanced cautiously about. From beneath the shade of an electric light pole he scanned the fronts of the pretentious homes of the city's wealthiest. Most of all he studied the imposing corner mansion before which he stood. With its high iron fence and its forbidding bronze doors it seemed to him like the barred castle of some feudal lord.

The great house gave forth no sign of life until, the clock in a neighboring steeple pealing "ten," lights suddenly sprang up in the second story windows. He could not see within because heavy yellow shades, swaying lightly in the vagrant summer night's breeze, shut off his view. But he saw, as he afterward recalled in his dire extremity, that they opened upon the roof of the single-storied conservatory that bounded the corner of the house. Between the outer walls of the conservatory and the high iron fence stretched a few feet of lawn.

His curious inspection was broken by the arrival of a handsome automobile. Out of its depths darted two distinguished looking gentleman. They hurried up the steps and disappeared so quickly within the heavy doors that it occurred to Hastings that their arrival must have been expected and a servant placed at the door to admit them promptly.

The two had barely entered before a taxicab drew up to the curb. From it issued two more men, one bearing under his arm several heavy volumes. Then came a carriage drawn by a high-stepping team whose expensive fittings clanked as if of silver. From this equipage issued a silk-hatted man whose white locks and slow steps clearly told his venerable age.

Then came limousine, taxi and touring car in quick succession with their loads of passengers. Allen carefully noted the nervous haste with which each man plunged into the great house. Twelve, all told, the arrivals numbered when the procession had ceased. A faint hum of voices from the lighted upper windows told him that this apartment must be the gathering place.

"Something doing here, all right," he muttered as he paced a few steps down the walk. "I wonder where Terry can be?"

He had not long to wait before finding out. A taxi drew up at the opposite corner and a lone figure slowly stumbled out. It came with uncertain steps toward the post where Hastings stood. In the flickering light he recognized the Star's best reporter.

"Hello, Terry, that you?" he whispered nervously.

"Jim" unsteadily grasped the electric light pole and with slow blinking eyes looked at Allen.

"Thash me," he muttered thickly. "Whash goin' on?"

Hastings told him briefly of the arrivals he had witnessed. He had to repeat his information twice before Terry sensed it.

"Thish th' place, all right, all right," the star reporter gulped.

"But what is it all about?" queried the "cub" nervously.

"Embezhl'ment — bankembezhl'ment," reeling as he released his hold on the pole to get a better grip.

"What's the bank?" Hastings trembled as he asked the question lest the answer name the bank in which Mabel Carrington's father was employed.

"Dunno," responded Terry disconsolately. "Dunno nothin' shept 's one o' ol' man Baker's."

"Is the Nineteenth National one of Baker's banks?" prodded Hastings.

"Nine'eenth Nash'nal?" Terry slowly opened his eyes wide as if to gather his fast thickening senses. "Yesh. Nine'eenth Nash' Baker's bank—one of hish big'st."

Allen caught a full whiff of the old reporter's breath as the latter lurched with bending knees toward him. It was heavy with liquor. His nose confirmed the evidence of his eyes. Terry was disgracefully, helplessly intoxicated.

The "cub" grasped the veteran by the shoulder and shook him vigorously.

"Here, here, old man, brace up," he said sharply. "You've got a big job on your hands."

"Big sjob," Terry mumbled with a wavering leer. "Zash right, big sjob." Then after a moment's pause in which he futilely tried to gather his wits: "Wha's use—big sjob—payday? Payday—get drunk."

With a stagger that Hastings vainly tried to check, Terry sunk in a limp heap to the curbstone.

"Here's a pretty mess," the "cub" exclaimed as he tried to raise the sodden figure. "The Star is going to miss this big story because Terry is drunk. I wonder if I can fill his place."

His first act, however, was to care for the helpless reporter. He half carried, half dragged him along the pavement to the taxicab in which Terry had arrived on the scene. Opening the door, he thrust the mumbling man in upon the cushions.

"Stay here till I come back," he instructed the chauffeur as he slammed the taxi door shut. "And don't let this fellow get away. He's a friend of mine."

Hastings hadn't retraced half a dozen steps toward the Baker home before the Nineteenth National bank again filled his mind. The fear that Mabel's father was the man over whom all the flurry was about grew almost to a certainty.

Why should he go on with the Star's investigation? It was not his assignment. Armstrong had simply told him to report to Terry. He had done his duty; he had reported. It was not his fault that Terry was in a helpless condition.

Besides, if he ducked now, there was the chance that the trouble in the Nineteenth National would not get to the public eye. Mabel would thus be saved at least the disgrace in the publicity of her father's offense.

Then it occurred to him that the Star office ought to know that Terry was unable to cover the assignment. He was half tempted to call up Armstrong on the telephone and report the situation.

"No," he finally decided, "I won't squeal on Terry. I'll see this thing through myself—even if I am only a 'cub.'"

And tossing his shoulders back, he ascended the steps of the home of Banker Baker and lifted the huge bronze knocker in the door.

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this remarkable story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

* * *

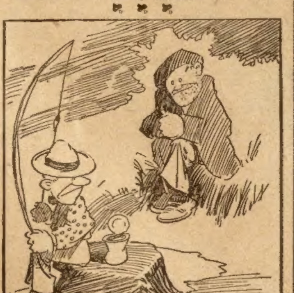
Colonel Hunter, the secretary of the W. D. Boyce Co., recently visited Tyrrell Ward & Co. and verified the claims of that company. The offers look so wonderful it was hard to believe any concern could "furnish a home without cost." Yet it is true. Tyrrell Ward & Co. have a big offer this issue on page seven.

* * *

A Curious Barometer.

A curious and simple barometer is used by the people who inhabit the southernmost province of Chile. It consists of the cast-off shell of a crab. The dead shell is said to be extremely sensitive to atmospheric changes, remaining quite white in dry weather, but indicating the approach of moisture by the appearance of small red spots, which grow both in number and in size as the moisture in the air increases, until finally, with the actual occurrence of rain, the shell becomes entirely red, and remains so throughout the rainy season.

* * *



Rodd—Don't you ever have a longing to go fishing?

Nodd—Yes; I've had a longin' to go fishin' a few times, but I've never had a longin' to dig bait, yet.

* * *

Meerschaums and Briars.

The price of meerschaum, which, some four years ago, rose 40 per cent, still remains high, but importers of the article deny that any scarcity exists, says the London Standard. The high price is due, they say, to the growing demand in the United States, where, of late years, there has been a tendency among smokers to discard cigars in favor of a pipe.

Vienna is the great wholesale market for meerschaum, and most of the supply is brought there from Constantinople. On all hands it is complained that it is found impossible to induce the Turks to exert themselves to meet the growing demand, although there is plenty of the raw material to be had. Sales in England, curiously enough, are much smaller than formerly. It is stated by one firm of wholesale dealers that they now sell a hundred briar pipes for one meerschaum, while forty-five years ago they sold at least twelve meerschaums for one briar. Perhaps smokers in those days had more leisure. In the matter of briars the dealers say that the wood is growing dearer, while its quality is growing poorer.

The same firm has in its possession some display bills of seventy years ago which proclaim the marvels of meerschaum, then a novelty. The bills, which are printed on silk, announce to "the nobility and public in general" that "this beautiful mineral—the froth of the sea of Azoff"—can now be supplied. Then follows an account of the difficulties with which meerschaum is obtained. The neighborhood of the pits is spoken of as "a wild and fearful scene such as Shakespeare has described in his 'Lear,'" and the material is said to be conveyed on camels for days across the immense deserts * * * to Constantinople, where is it used by the ladies of the eastern harems to cleanse their hair."

At the present time there is a considerable amount of second-class meerschaum from which cheap pipes are manufactured, and it is owing to this fact that few serious attempts at imitation are made. Prices are said by dealers to be slightly lower than was the case four years ago, though still much higher than before the great rise.

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In accordance with the U.S. Law and under direction of United States Internal Revenue Officers. Every bottle has a green U. S. stamp over the cork stating that the whiskey is *100 In Proof and over 4 years old.*

8 Short Quarts	$5.45
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12 Full Quarts	$8.95
24 Full Pints only	$9.45
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In lots of 5 full cases **Gold Band** you can deduct 50c per case.

100 PROOF OVER 4 YEARS OLD GOLD BAND WHISKEY 100 PER CENT IN PROOF 100 PER CENT HONEST 100 PER CENT PURE 100 PER CENT STRAIGHT BOTTLED IN BOND U.S. DISTILLING Co. U.S.

2 Gallons of any brand below:

Mountain Corn
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Return this advertisement; Send money with order and be sure and give name of Express Co. doing business in your town. Address letter to nearest place below:

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SEND FOR FREE CATALOG

Model 50 Straight Frame **Union Repeating Shot Gun $22.50**

Solid breech, 12 gauge hammerless take down; six-shot; positive safe—can be thrown off and trigger pulled with same movement of finger; genuine **Krupp Steel barrel**, any choke desired; stock best American Black Walnut, stock and handhold handsomely checkered; **multi-groove** full length top rib, giving perfectly straight line of sight over frame—takes glare off barrel; no breech block or side plate to work back over hand, no projecting screws or parts to cause annoyance; penetration and shooting qualities guaranteed equal to any shot gun made. See this gun at your dealers, if he hasn't it write us mentioning his name. We will send it direct with privilege of examination. Drop a card for free catalog.

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***I Guarantee to Cure* ECZEMA TO STAY CURED!**

It is also called SALT RHEUM, SCALD HEAD, TETTER, ITCH, WEEPING SKIN, MILK CRUST, PRURITUS—these are different names, but all mean one thing—ECZEMA.

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I prove every word that I have said—I give to every sufferer

A FREE TRIAL

Just to show you that you need my treatment. It is yours for the asking. If you have been to other Doctors, if you have taken patent medicine, and used lotions and salves till you are disgusted, write to me—I will send you ABSOLUTELY FREE OF CHARGE, A TRIAL TREATMENT. There are no strings to this statement. There is not one cent to pay—not a penny accepted. I know what my trial treatment will do; I know that it will convince you more than anything else on earth that you need my treatment.

Don't Miss This Chance for a Cure

If you are SUFFERING FROM ECZEMA you can only be cured one way—REMOVE THE CAUSE. What is the cause? ACID IN THE BLOOD. How do you remove it? By cleansing the blood of the ACID.

My treatment is soothing—relieves the dreadful itching at once and cures the disease quickly. You don't have to take treatment for months and months. ONLY ONE CASE IN TEN needs the second treatment—ONE IN FIFTY needs the third—think of that!

What Eczema Is

Eczema is a disease of the blood and affects all parts of the body—the face, lips, ears, hands, feet, genital organ, etc.

SYMPTOMS.—Yellowish red eruption; the pimples or patches may swell and the itching is so great the person will scratch the top off, then they bleed and dark scales form; there is an oozing of matter. In some the skin cracks and bleeds. Itching is terrible; a person suffering will scratch till they bleed. Scales form on parts of the body, where the clothing comes in contact.

Ten Years Guarantee

I positively Guarantee that every case cured by me will stay cured 10 YEARS! It must be good or it could not be sold this way.

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I am a graduate from two leading medical schools. I am the holder of a GOLD MEDAL taken in Competitive Examination. Does this not show that I am fully qualified? I will send you my book, showing endorsements of business men of all classes. Also testimonials and pictures from cured patients everywhere. Some of them may be YOUR NEIGHBORS.

MY BOOK

Is the most complete book ever sent out. I explain every form of the disease plainly and fully. I show pictures of many severe cases, which are extremely interesting. I send you names of thousands who have been cured and are grateful.

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Reliable Beyond Question

This is a statement from the bank of my home town, where I have done business for years.

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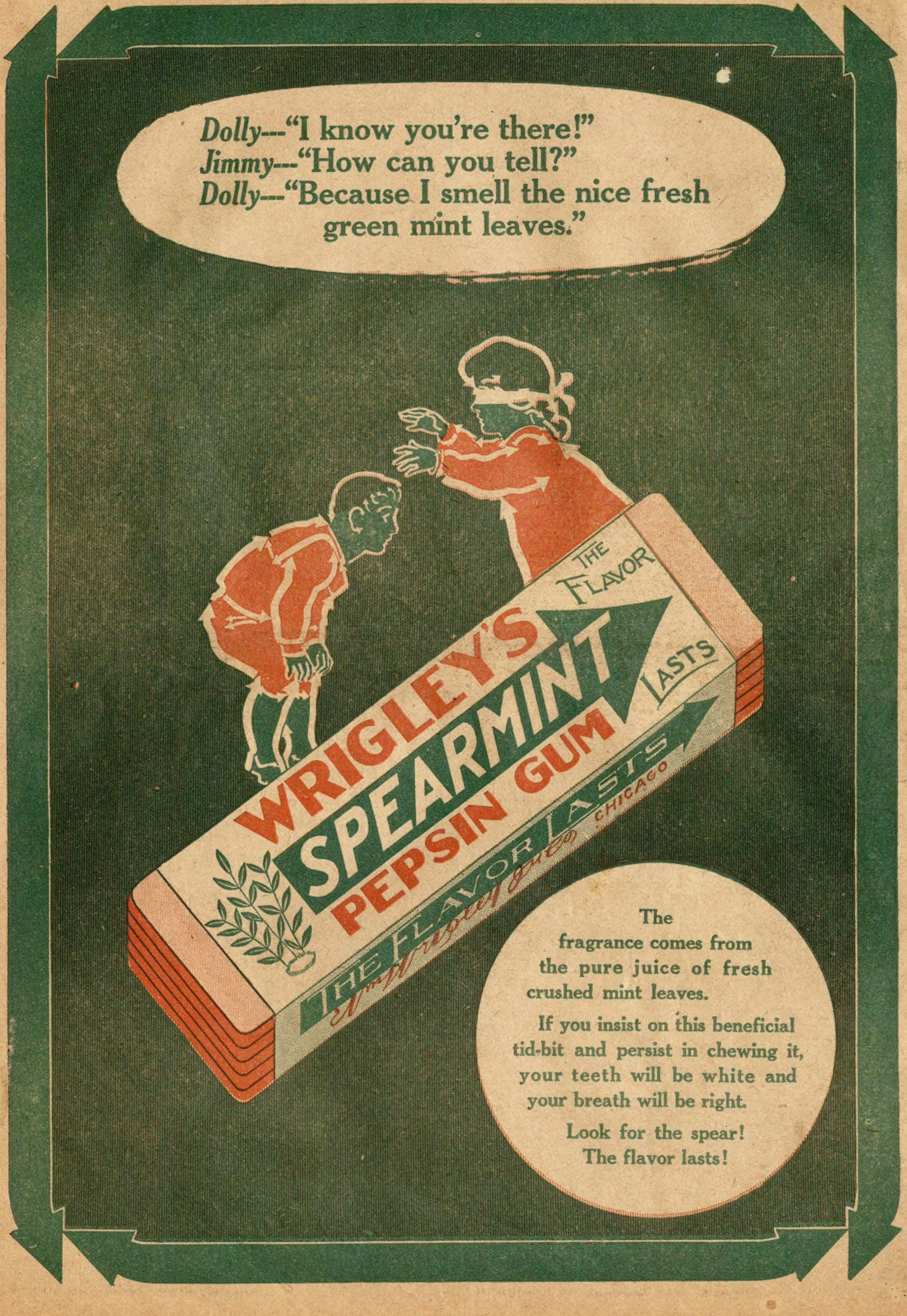

Dolly---"I know you're there!"
Jimmy---"How can you tell?"
Dolly---"Because I smell the nice fresh green mint leaves."

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The fragrance comes from the pure juice of fresh crushed mint leaves.

If you insist on this beneficial tid-bit and persist in chewing it, your teeth will be white and your breath will be right.

Look for the spear!
The flavor lasts!